# PERCEPTIONS OF IDAHO'S DIGITAL NATIVES ON PUBLIC LIBRARIES

STATEWIDE FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS



## **Idaho Commission for Libraries**

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# PERCEPTIONS OF IDAHO'S DIGITAL NATIVES ON LIBRARIES: STATEWIDE FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

#### FOCUS GROUPS WITH DIGITAL NATIVES

#### INTRODUCTION

Corona Research is pleased to present this report of research findings to the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL). The following report includes a description of the project design, methodology, and implementation of focus groups, along with focus group findings, including both key findings, which are presented at the beginning of this report, and detailed findings.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In May, 2007, Corona Research was retained by the Idaho Commission for Libraries to conduct focus group research with "Digital Natives," identified by the ICFL as the generation (12-25 years old) growing up with computers and Internet since infancy.

The process of more effectively reaching Digital Natives, who currently use Idaho libraries at below average rates, was recently identified by the 2005 Futures Conference Steering Committee as one of four strategic priorities on a statewide level. Thus, the purpose of research in the current study was to identify themes and trends related to Digital Natives' needs and desires in local library services.

Findings included in this report will assist ICFL decision makers in working with local libraries statewide in providing relevant services to this generation of residents and attracting them at higher rates. In addition to this report, Corona Research provided the ICFL with a series of video clips from focus groups that will assist the ICFL in further training and communications activities.

#### PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Corona Research conducted a total of 12 focus groups in the current research project. Six groups were conducted with 12-17 year olds and six groups were conducted with 18-25 year olds. One group with each segment was conducted in each of six geographic locations in Idaho. Locations were chosen so that major regions of the state would be represented in the study. The six locations included: Blackfoot; Boise; Burley; Coeur D'Alene; Lewiston; and Pocatello.

The following paragraphs describe key factors in the methodology of recruitment and implementation of focus groups.

**Recruitment.** Corona Research assumed responsibility for recruiting focus group participants for all group sessions. Recruiting was conducted through multiple channels so as to increase chances of filling groups and to reach a wide selection of the audience, where necessary. A breakdown of the recruiting tools used in each geographic area are presented in the following table.

#### RECRUITING TOOLS USED - BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA

	Direct Mailing	Newspaper Ad	Radio Ad	Flyer Posting at Community	Internet Ad / Banner
				Center	
Blackfoot	V		V		1
Boise	V	V			<b>V</b>
Burley	V		V		√
Coeur D'Alene	V			V	√ ·
Lewiston	V		V	V	V
Pocatello	V	V	V		V

Each of the tools described above accomplished the same purpose. That is, each announced the upcoming focus groups and encouraged interested respondents to call a toll-free number at Corona Research to register for a group. During registration, all steps of the process described below were conducted.

- 1) A Corona Research recruiting representative proceeded to ask qualifying questions from a screener that was designed by the research team. (Note: Due to the nature of the audience recruited, Corona representatives commonly spoke with parents of the school-age children during the recruiting process).
- 2) To be eligible, participants had to meet basic criteria, which included:
  - a. Appropriate age.
  - b. Resident of local area.

In addition, the recruiting team monitored signups to ensure group participants were somewhat diverse and representative in terms of age, gender, and library usage patterns. Otherwise, potential participants were deemed ineligible during the recruiting process if someone in their household worked for a market research firm, a library or a library-related organization.

- 3) Once eligibility was determined and participants were assigned to a group, they were informed as to the time and location where the focus group would take place. Participants' names, addresses and phone numbers were recorded at this time.
- 4) Corona Research mailed reminder letters to all participants, and parents of 12-17 year olds, announcing the date and the time of the discussion group to which they

- were assigned. These letters were mailed so that those who registered received them approximately two days before the group was to take place. Letters prompted participants to contact the research team if they had questions.
- 5) In addition to reminder letters, each participant who was signed up received a photo release form to be signed (by a parent if 12-17) and returned to the research team, thereby giving approval for appearing on videotape, from which clips may be used by the ICFL for further training and communications purposes.
- 6) A consent form was also sent to parents of 12-17 year olds, and this form was signed and returned to the research team, thereby allowing participation in groups by underage minors.
- 7) A final, follow-up reminder telephone call was placed to all respondents, usually the day or night before the group session was to take place. This call was to confirm attendance so that the research team could be reasonably confident of adequate attendance.
- 8) Recruiting was performed with a goal of seating 8 to 10 participants in each group session. Because "no show" rates can be high for focus groups with younger age participants, 11-12 people were registered for each group. Actual response was very favorable and attendance for all groups met or exceeded expectations. No group had fewer than 8 participants and several had 10 or 11 participants.

#### FOCUS GROUP DETAILS

	Segment	Date & Time	Location
Group 1	12-17 years old	June 19, 2007	Guest House Inn Lewiston, ID
		3-5 p.m.	
Group 2	18-25 years old	June 19, 2007	Guest House Inn
1	,	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Lewiston, ID
Group 3	12-17 years old	June 20, 2007	Silver Lake Motel
	y <b>u</b>	3-5 p.m.	Coeur d'Alene, ID
Group 4	18-25 years old	June 20, 2007	Silver Lake Motel
Gloup 4	10-25 years old	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Coeur d'Alene, ID
Group 5	12-17 years old	June 21, 2007	Spring Hill Marriott
•	•	3-5 p.m.	Boise, ID
Group 6	18-25 years old	June 21, 2007	Spring Hill Marriott
Group v	10-25 years old	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Boise, ID
Group 7	12-17 years old	June 26, 2007	Best Western Burley
Group 7	12 17 years old	3-5 p.m.	Burley, ID
Group 8	18-25 years old	June 26, 2007	Best Western Burley
Group o	10 25 years old	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Burley, ID
Group 9	12-17 years old	June 27, 2007	Pocatello Rec. Center
Group	12 17 years old	3-5 p.m.	Pocatello, ID
Group 10	18-25 years old	June 27, 2007	Pocatello Rec. Center
Group IV	10 20 years old	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Pocatello, ID
Group 11	12-17 years old	June 28, 2007	Best Western Blackfoot
Group 11	12 17 years old	3-5 p.m.	Blackfoot, ID
Group 12	18-25 years old	June 28, 2007	Best Western Blackfoot
310up 12	10 25 years old	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Blackfoot, ID

**Moderators for Focus Groups:** Leo Lewis and Kevin Raines, Principals at Corona Research, served as moderators for focus groups with older digital natives. Holly Leyendecker and Beth Mulligan, Analysts at Corona Research, served as moderators for the groups with 12-17 year old digital natives.

Focus Group Discussion Guide and Other Materials: The full focus group discussion guide is presented in Appendix A. The guide incorporated feedback from the client. It was used by the moderator as a flexible guideline for group discussion, in that the moderator had the option to diverge from the guide if appropriate.

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

The following are key findings from the 12 focus groups conducted in this study. Key findings are broken down by those findings from across all groups as well as those findings within each of the age segments (i.e. 12-17 and 18-25) examined in this study. Detailed findings are presented later in this report.

## THEMES IDENTIFIED ACROSS ALL GROUPS

The findings below represent common themes that were heard across all of the group discussions conducted with both age groups.

- 1) Digital natives place a high value on learning and education. Regardless of age, participants across all groups stated that education and learning are extremely important. They explained that education is a necessity in order to "progress" in life. Both education and learning were thought to be vital in developing a career, for interacting with others, and simply to make their lives better by understanding the world around them. Libraries can use this to their advantage since they are already perceived to be a trusted source of information. By adapting their web-based resources to digital natives' desires, libraries can thrive as focal point for information, and thus, learning.
- 2) Teachers play an extremely important role in digital natives' learning experiences. Both the younger and older segments of digital natives identified people as a key ingredient to understanding concepts in school, and to learning about life in general. Each age group expressed that teachers are vital in their learning processes; the younger groups, especially, seemed to feel that teachers are the leaders in their learning experiences, and often stated that they are likely to turn to teachers when questions arose. Enthusiasm was identified as an ideal trait for teachers to possess. Everyone expressed that a teacher's excitement about a topic is contagious, and that they are far more likely to enjoy learning from someone that projects enthusiasm.

This finding helps clarify what digital natives expect from librarians. Similar to what they admire in teachers, digital natives stated that librarians should have enthusiasm about what they do in order to provoke interest. The groups expressed a desire for librarians that specialize in particular areas within a library in order to provide indepth information, and for them to be able to make book recommendations. It was perceived to be the responsibility of the librarian to understand how to use all tools necessary to obtain information, and to be able to demonstrate this.

3) Learning about opposing viewpoints and having interactions with others are important. Those in both age groups mentioned the importance of learning from other people's viewpoints. Students in all age groups were highly likely to mention this as they expressed that interactions with classmates during classroom discussions are very helpful in their learning process. Everyone felt that the Internet is a valuable learning tool because it provides access to so many different points of view. They also placed a high value on hearing opposing opinions in their efforts to

understand others around them. Libraries can use this information when forming the activities they make available to digital natives. By providing activities that allow social interaction, and the exchange of ideas among digital natives, they can ensure an increase level of participation.

- 4) Both younger and older digital natives are most likely to pay attention to information that is fun and interesting. This finding relates not only to informational content, but to the way that information is presented. Digital natives expressed that they like to be entertained, and sometimes learn from entertaining sources without even realizing that they are learning. They stated that they like learning fun and interesting tidbits, but also tend to like current events, especially those that affect them. Local libraries, thus, have the opportunity to be the primary repository for community information, current events, and activities.
- 5) Information on the Internet is not always trustworthy. Participants across all groups expressed a certain amount of initial distrust or skepticism for information obtained online. Participants generally felt that information cannot always be trusted because sources are often not identified, and because it is possible for anyone to post anything online. Additionally, it is sometimes difficult to tell if the information obtained is fact-based, or opinion-based. Digital natives were more likely to trust information obtained through a website that is deemed trustworthy, such as a university website, a government site, or a library-sponsored site. This opens the door widely for libraries to provide a library sponsored search engine for their patrons. This offers digital natives the convenience and credibility that they desire when attaining information.
- 6) The Internet is typically the starting point when a search for information is begun. Digital natives of all ages were most likely to state that they turn to the Internet first when seeking information. However, the way that they handled what they find online seemed to vary according to age group. Recognizing that not all information online is reliable, the younger digital natives explained that they are likely to verify what they find by looking at several different websites to see if similar ideas are expressed in multiple places. Older digital natives were more likely to turn to books or journals in an attempt to verify that what they read online is valid information. By offering a library-sponsored search engine, then, libraries can make themselves the starting and ending point in the search for information. The added appeal of such a site to digital natives is that they could save even more time because the need for verifying facts would be decreased or even eliminated.
- 7) Overall, information obtained through books and libraries is much more trustworthy than information found online. Repeatedly, participants in all groups stated that they trusted information that they read in books or found in libraries. Still, the Internet was the most popular place to begin a search for information as the desire for convenience reigned over most digital natives.
- 8) Convenience is most important when digital natives look for information. This is evident when it is considered that participants across all groups stated that information online may be unreliable, yet the Internet was the number one tool for obtaining information. Without fail, it was stated that this was because using the Internet is just easier and faster than heading to the library. Libraries, therefore, will

have to make information convenient in order to appeal to digital natives as a leading source for information. The demand for this exists given that many participants praised libraries for providing credible information. Any lack of library use for research purposes seemed to be purely due to an apparent lack of convenience for accessing information when compared with the Internet.

- 9) Public libraries should make websites available that would allow digital natives to access credible information online. There is strong demand for trustworthy information and convenience. Because public libraries are a respected source for accurate information, digital natives felt that they would be an excellent gateway to information as it exists online by providing access to websites deemed trustworthy by libraries, or by offering access to electronic books, magazines, and journals. Additionally, having online access to the library catalog was a very popular idea. While this service is already available through multiple libraries, its awareness among participants was relatively low.
- 10) The purpose of a library's physical location is perceived to be shifting from one of providing tools for research, to that of entertainment. As convenience gains increasing importance in seeking information, digital natives appear to want to steer the purpose of a library to that of entertainment and social interaction. However, there still exists a gap between expectations and reality. Digital natives like the idea of a library being a place for social interaction and community activities, but in most cases, still perceive libraries to be quiet places for getting work done. Interestingly, some of these perceptions are probably linked to digital natives' professed usage of bookstores like Barnes & Noble for entertainment in their free time.
- 11) Even digital natives who do not enjoy reading admit that they go to bookstores for entertainment. Many participants said that they used trips to bookstores as a way to fill their free time. Bookstores reigned over libraries for this purpose for multiple reasons, including the feeling that the need to be quiet was not as extreme. They were able to go with friends and "hang out." Also, the overall image of bookstores was entirely different from that of libraries. Bookstores are modern-looking, have comfortable furnishings, have coffee available, and are more relaxing and welcoming. Additionally, they offer access to multiple sources of entertainment, such as music stations for listening to CDs.
- 12) Digital natives generally perceive libraries as places for serious work, quiet, and books. This finding is an example of the aforementioned gap between what digital natives want the library to become, and how they perceive most libraries currently. It should be noted that some libraries are thought to have a welcoming, modern atmosphere. Overall, however, libraries will have to rebuild their image in order to attract digital natives. It is interesting to note that, in most cases, digital natives were willing to drive farther in order to reach a more welcoming library. This is contrary to their professed love for convenience, and shows the relative importance of environment in library usage.
- 13) Libraries are mostly for young children and older adults, but not for those that fall into the age range that encompasses digital natives. Most digital natives did not feel that public libraries were for their age group. Libraries were

generally thought to be more for small children or older people. Even digital natives who frequent the library commented that they rarely see other people their own age while there. They felt that this was, in part, due to the fact that libraries typically have a well-developed children's section, and an environment geared towards adults, but not an area for teens and young adults. Even where a teen section is available, it is often labeled "too small." Similarly, activities at the library were frequently identified as pertaining to little children or older adults, but very little is perceived to be available for those in the 12-25 year old age range.

- 14) Libraries can change how they are perceived by changing their look, and becoming more involved with the community. Digital natives who had local libraries that are more modern-looking, and which offer programs geared towards those in the digital natives' age range, were more likely to be perceived to be fun places for entertainment.
- 15) Libraries must involve the community when designing programs and events. Participants felt that libraries should incorporate feedback from all different members of the community when designing events and activities. Younger digital natives mentioned that having feedback from their age group was especially important since teens generally do not get involved with particular activities unless they perceive it to be something that other people their age are doing.
- 16) In order to keep current users coming, and bring in non-users, libraries need to offer a range of services, activities and environments. In several groups, participants remarked that the more libraries can offer, the more people they will be able to attract, since everyone likes something different. A couple things to consider include:
  - Across both age groups, current, regular users of the library already liked some aspects of public libraries. They liked knowing that it is a place where they are guaranteed a quiet spot where they can relax or get work done. However, they felt that there is room for improvement. They preferred a more inviting atmosphere with more space, and comfortable furniture. They were not opposed to having areas in the library where people could be loud if they want. Across all groups, participants repeatedly explained that libraries should be divided into sections, or multiple floors, for different types of activities.
  - Non-users explained that they rarely use the library, typically because they predominately use the Internet for research and no longer feel that they need libraries for this purpose. Because they rarely read for entertainment, they do not see a reason why they will go to the library. On top of this, many of these digital natives prefer doing activities with their friends during their free time. Since the library is perceived to be a serious and quiet environment, it follows that they will not go to the library with friends. They will sometimes, however, go to bookstores. Thus, if the library were to provide an environment that is perceived to encourage people to come visit, is comfortable, and conducive to being with friends, then attendance will likely increase.
- 17) Libraries need to advertise so that communities will know about the programs they offer. Participants frequently commented that even if their libraries

offered activities that they might enjoy, they might not know about them because libraries generally do not advertise. Most people expressed that when libraries did advertise, it was typically in a place that only current users of libraries would see, so other members of the community remain uninformed. It should be noted that if libraries are currently advertising, it is not being done in places where it is noticed by digital natives, at least as far as the participants in these focus groups indicated. Participants mentioned weekly mailers, television ads on local stations, flyers, and ads in school newspapers as several sources for reaching them.

- 18) Libraries should have multiple floors or multiple sections so that they can host a broad range of activities and cover a broad range of community needs. Ideas that were presented in multiple groups across both age groups included:
  - Add a coffee shop or small café. The availability of coffee and/or food was thought to be an excellent addition to libraries. It was thought that this will make libraries much more welcoming and laid-back. It was suggested that this should be in its own small section so that socializing can take place without bothering those who come to the library for the quiet environment.
  - Provide a teen/young adult section. Participants still desired that small children have their own section, but the younger digital natives, especially, thought that having a section of their own would be enjoyable. The section might include teen books, music stations where visitors can sit and listen to popular music on headphones, and computers with teen-oriented games or information.
  - Provide media rooms. This was discussed across both age groups. Participants liked the idea of having rooms where DVDs can be watched or CDs can be listened to, alone or in small groups.
  - Reserve some areas for larger-scale entertainment. Participants across both age groups discussed including a stage area for performances in libraries. They also suggested a large screen for viewing movies or for younger participants, playing video games against others.
  - Make meeting spaces available. In the younger groups, participants generally referred to these as "loud rooms," or places where they can go to study or hang out with friends without worrying about staying quiet. The older groups discussed making similar spaces available, although they perceived that the areas would be useful for study groups or local organizations that need a space to meet.
  - Add some color and make environment more appealing. Especially in the younger groups, participants commented that painting the walls with warm colors, and adding posters or decorations on the walls would make libraries feel more comfortable.
  - ➤ <u>Update furnishings.</u> Most group participants commented that comfortable chairs or couches, in addition to desks, which were still considered important for studying or completing tasks, would be very appealing for those who like to

- relax and read. Participants also suggested that wooden shelving that keeps most books closer to eye-level would be a nice feature.
- Provide open spaces with natural light. Participants frequently commented that they prefer libraries that feel more "open," and that have plenty of windows for natural light.

THEMES FROM THE YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVE GROUPS (12 TO 17)

These findings represent common themes that were heard during the discussions with the younger groups of digital natives.

- 1) High school students feel that they have less free time than when they were younger. Within the younger groups, the older participants generally felt that they had much less time available than when they were younger. Many of these participants worked in addition to going to school. This lack of free time made participants even less likely to go to the library, which was perceived to be a much more time-consuming way of obtaining information than the Internet. Additionally, most of the free time that they have available is during the evening hours. This is likely why so many participants in this age category expressed that the library should stay open later because it is difficult to get to the library before it closes, or to ensure that they have enough time to accomplish what they need to do.
- 2) All young digital natives name at least one type of technology that they use on a daily basis, whether it is for entertainment, or to get information for a school project. Participants named computers, cell phones, MP3 players or iPods, and video game players as technological devices that they use on a daily basis. Almost all of their preferred forms of entertainment can be accessed using these devices. This exemplifies this group's reliance on technology for entertainment and information. In order to remain useful to digital natives, libraries need to be certain to incorporate the availability of technology in their roles as a source for information and entertainment. Making technology available will also help attract digital natives to libraries. As an example, digital natives mention that they frequently enjoy downloading materials like books and podcasts on their iPods.
- 3) Education and learning are usually enjoyable. Younger digital natives generally enjoy learning, but tend to enjoy some subjects more than others, based on personal preference. Sometimes this was linked to what they felt that they were good at doing. Younger digital natives also related their level of enjoyment when learning to the teacher. They frequently commented that teachers make the difference between suffering through a class, or making a difficult subject fun. Enthusiasm was identified as one of the most important characteristics for a teacher to possess. Libraries, then, will need to offer a variety of activities and resources in order to be able to appeal to digital natives with varying interests. Additionally, library staff need to express enthusiasm in order to keep libraries from feeling "old" and "stuffy."
- 4) Younger digital natives rely almost entirely on the Internet for research. Unlike the older groups, younger participants were likely to begin and end their

research online, despite the fact that they acknowledged that information online is sometimes untrustworthy. They attempt to verify information they find, but typically use other Internet sites to do so. They frequently stated that they only use other sources like books or articles for a school project if they are required to, which they frequently were. This finding offers libraries a gateway to increase use of its online services. For example, if given access to a library-sponsored search tool, younger digital natives will be able to access credible information through the manner with which they are most comfortable. Additionally, this segment will benefit greatly from having access to full-text books and magazines online.

- 5) Libraries are perceived to be an old-fashioned, cumbersome way to get information. Participants frequently stated that they prefer using the Internet to get information because it is so fast and convenient. The library was viewed as a very time-consuming way to search for information. The Internet was also perceived to be a way to get more information with less actual reading, which is highly preferable to some participants.
- 6) The Internet has some limitations. The groups explained that it is sometimes difficult to find the information that they want despite the ease of use of search engines. They believed that this might be due to the fact that they do not always know how to place parameters on a search, so that they end up with links to sites that are completely unrelated to what they really want. Additionally, current events and recent postings dominate the links provided by search engines so it is sometimes difficult to find older information. These types of dead-ends will frequently be the precedent to a trip to the library. The added benefit of libraries is that there is someone there to help in case where a student becomes "stuck" and does not know how to continue a search for information.
- 7) A library is not a place to go with friends. Younger digital natives mostly perceive the library to be a place to go to use the Internet for research purposes, or to complete assignments for school. They did not see reasons why they will go with friends, especially since they enjoy talking with friends, and perceive that this is not an option at the library. These were major deterrents for younger digital natives who consider going to libraries.
- 8) **Libraries should have a teen section.** Participants in the younger groups expressed an interest in having sections with books, computers, stations to listen to music through headphones, and CD and DVD collections geared towards their interests available to them in libraries. Those who already had a teen section in their public library frequently commented that it needs to be bigger.
- 9) Understanding how libraries should be used is important, and would help make the library less intimidating. Groups generally expressed that they might like to better understand how libraries work, and that libraries should incorporate some kind of program with schools to teach students how to use their public libraries to find information (to make them less intimidating and more useful).
- 10) Libraries should elicit opinions and ideas from younger digital natives when creating programs and services targeted for this group. Participants suggested that surveying people in their age group, and perhaps even forming a teen council

for the library, can help with this. Participants appeared to feel that activities currently organized by libraries are obviously put together by adults, which is unappealing. Involving teens in making decisions will ensure that more people want to be involved.

- 11) Library activities that provide opportunities for social interaction are very appealing to younger digital natives. The most popular potential library resources and activities selected by this age group included Friday afternoon teen movies, and a coffee shop. Other high-scoring activities were related to socializing with friends.
- 12) Potential web-based library resources preferred by younger digital natives will provide convenient access to reliable information. Two of the top choices were electronic books and electronic journals or magazines. These were preferred because they allow easy access to information, and provide the opportunity to print out only the information that was needed from a particular article.

#### THEMES FROM THE OLDER DIGITAL NATIVE GROUPS (18 TO 25)

The following findings represent common themes that were heard during the discussions with the older groups of digital natives.

- 1) Older digital natives engage in many technology-based activities in their spare time. The groups named numerous outdoor activities that they enjoy doing in their spare time, and explained that they frequently entertain themselves online when they are unable to get outside. The older participants seemed much more likely to use the Internet for entertainment, using sites like MySpace and Facebook as communication tools. Libraries were not generally places to use the Internet for entertainment, however. The groups explained that there are time limits placed on Internet use, which is unappealing when using these sites. Additionally, libraries were primarily perceived as places for research and serious work.
- 2) It is important to use more traditional sources like books and journals when researching a topic, in addition to the Internet. Unlike the younger groups, the older digital natives still appeared to have some connection to using books and magazines or journals for information. They commented that they sometimes use these resources to verify what they read online. Libraries, then, were generally still perceived to be useful in obtaining information to the older digital natives, which was not the case with the younger groups.
- 3) Older digital natives who have been to college believe that public libraries only have access to a fraction of what their college libraries offer. This perception made them even more likely to think that public libraries should exist for fun activities and community information. In general, older digital natives were more likely to feel that public libraries cannot afford to have the same resources as large college or university libraries.
- 4) Education and learning are highly valued by older digital natives. These groups expressed that education and learning are important because they are

essential to advance in a career, and to make as much money as possible. Additionally, they felt that it is important to learn in order to enrich their lives. Since older digital natives perceived the library to be a source for information, they value libraries for the opportunity they provide to learn. This finding also ties into the activities that older digital natives stated they prefer to have available at libraries: that is, intellectual activities like foreign language classes or book clubs and reading programs were top choices.

- 5) Hands-on experience is perceived to be the most valuable source in older digital natives' learning experiences. Although the groups valued all forms of learning (through other people, through technology, etc.), they ultimately expressed that learning things through first-hand experience is the most valuable method for learning. Because the groups were older, this perception was possibly due to the fact that the participants had literally learned from their experiences in life. As a consequence of this perception, older digital natives still like to have access to actual materials, such as books, particularly reference or "how to" books, in some cases.
- 6) Public libraries are important because they provide free access to vast quantities of information for everyone in a community. The older groups were much more likely to comment on the importance of libraries providing services and resources to the public for free. They perceived public libraries to be important hubs for community information, such as news affecting local issues, or local events.
- 7) Older digital natives value libraries for the social and educational opportunities they offer children. Parents in the groups of older digital natives frequently commented that they take their children to nearby public libraries to access reading materials or to take part in reading programs. Several other participants commented that they like to take younger relatives to the library as a source of entertainment. A few recalled favorable experiences when they visited the library as children.
- 8) Those who otherwise enjoy reading sometimes do not because they are unsure what they should read and would like to get recommendations. Older digital natives frequently commented that they enjoy reading, but are unsure of what book to get when going to the library. This shows when reviewing some of their suggestions for library improvements. In several groups, it was mentioned that library catalogs should make book suggestions when a person looks up a title, similar to the Amazon.com website. The desire to find books to read was likely one reason that the older groups choose book clubs/reading programs as a desired library service.
- 9) The fact that older digital natives believe that libraries should act as a hub for community information is reflected in their choices for potential library services and resources. The top two choices among the older groups were meeting rooms and job/career information. The availability of meeting rooms was extremely popular. Participants felt that there are many local organizations that are likely in need of good, small-scale meeting spaces. They also felt that the library is an excellent place to learn more about job and career information, which is also be a valuable tool to community members.

10) Web-based resources offered by public libraries should include reference tools. The preferred resources chosen by the older digital natives were all related to accessing information online. This is despite the perception that public libraries would not be able to afford to offer resources equal to what a university provides online to its students. Still, it is an indicator of the importance that digital natives place on convenient access to reliable information.

#### FOCUS GROUP PROFILES

This section includes a brief discussion of the characteristics of each focus group. In addition, group profiles for each group are given on the following pages based on participant feedback and comments as gathered during the focus group discussion.

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

Based on information gathered from introductory remarks made by participants, and information gathered during the recruiting process, brief descriptive group profile characteristics are given as follows:

- Group 1: Lewiston, 12-17 This group was composed of five female and six male participants. Everyone in the group attended a public junior high or high school, except for one attendee who was home-schooled. About five of the participants went to a library somewhat frequently, while the other six had rarely used public libraries within the past two years. No one had been in a focus group before.
- Group 2: Lewiston, 18-25 Three women and five men attended this focus group. Two participants were college students, four were employed full-time, one woman was a homemaker, and one man was unemployed. Two people visited public libraries somewhat regularly; the remaining individuals had rarely been to the library within the past two years. Only one person had previously been in a focus group.
- Group 3: Coeur d'Alene, 12-17 There were five girls and six boys participating in this focus group. The majority of the attendees went to school at a public junior high or high school, although one person was home-schooled. Two people went to a public library semi-regularly; the rest of the group only went occasionally within the past two years. One person had been in a focus group before.
- Group 4: Coeur d'Alene, 18-25 Six men and five women attended this focus group discussion. Six of the participants were college students at a variety of schools, and five people were employed full-time. Four attendees in this group frequently went to a public library; the remaining seven people had only been occasionally within the past two years. No one had previously been in a focus group.
- Group 5: Boise, 12-17 Six boys and five girls participated in this focus group discussion. One participant was home-schooled, one person went to a private school, and the remaining attendees went to a variety of public schools in the area. Four participants used public libraries very frequently; the other seven people had only made a limited number of visits within the past two years. None of the participants had previously been in a focus group.
- **Group 6: Boise, 18-25** There were three men and five women participating in this focus group. Six of the attendees were college students. One of the women had two children. Two people in the group visited a library very frequently, several

- participants went occasionally, and one person had not been to a library at all within the past two years. Two participants had been in a focus group in the past.
- **Group 7: Burley, 12-17** This group was composed of four male and six female participants. All of the respondents attended a public junior high or high school. Two participants went to a library very frequently, four people went somewhat regularly, three went occasionally, and one had not been at all within the past two years. Only one person had been in a focus group in the past.
- Group 8: Burley, 18-25 This focus group was composed entirely of women. Two of the participants were current college students, and two had recently graduated from a university. Four of the women had children. Three participants went to a library frequently, one went somewhat regularly, and four had gone occasionally within the past two years. Two participants had been in a focus group before.
- Group 9: Pocatello, 12-17 There were five boys and five girls participating in this focus group. Everyone attended a public junior high or high school in the area. One person went to a library very frequently, three only went occasionally, and six had rarely gone to the library in the past two years. No one had been in a focus group before.
- Group 10: Pocatello, 18-25 Four men and four women attended this focus group. Three participants were working towards a college degree. Three people were employed full-time while two were looking for work. One person had several children. Two people in the group went to a library very frequently, three went somewhat regularly, and three had rarely been to the library in the past two years. No one had previously participated in a focus group.
- Group 11: Blackfoot, 12-17 There were six male and four female participants in this focus group. Everyone in the group went to a public junior high or high school. Two participants went to the library frequently, four people went occasionally, and four had rarely been to a library within the past two years. There was one Hispanic attendee; everyone else in the group was Caucasian. None of the participants had been in a focus group before.
- Group 12: Blackfoot, 18-25 There were four male and six female participants in this group. Six of the attendees were college students at a variety of schools. Two people were employed full-time; one person was unemployed. One woman in the group had children. Five people went to the public library frequently; the remaining five participants had rarely been to a library within the past five years. There were two Hispanic participants; everyone else in the group was Caucasian. No one had been in a focus group before.

Further summary information for groups is provided in the tables on the following pages.

## **GROUP ONE (LEWISTON 12-17)**

Number of Participants	• 11 participants
Ages	• 12 (4)
	• 13 (1)
	• 14 (2)
	• 16 (2)
	• 17 (2)
Gender	6 participants were male
	5 participants were female
Towns or cities represented in group	Clarkston, WA (1)
represented in group	• Lewiston (7)
	• Moscow (1)
	2 participants did not state where they lived
Library usage within group: number of visits	• 100 (1)
within past two years	• 30 (1)
	• 25 (1)
	• 10 (1)
	• 5 (1)
	At least twice per week (1)
	At least once per week (3)
	Two or three times (1)
	Not much (1)

## **GROUP TWO (LEWISTON 18-25)**

Number of Participants	8 participants
Ages	• 19 (1)
	• 20 (1)
	• 21 (2)
	• 24 (3)
	• 25 (1)
Gender	5 participants were male
	3 participants were female
Occupation	2 participants were college students
	1 participant was a homemaker
	1 participant was unemployed
	• 1 participant was a teacher
	1 participant worked at a children's home
	2 participants did not state their occupations
Library usage within group: number of visits	• 2 (1)
within past two years	• 3 (1)
	• 5 (1)
	• 9 (1)
	• 10 (2)
	• 24 (1)
	Once per week (1)

## GROUP THREE (COEUR D'ALENE 12-17)

Number of Participants	• 11 participants
Ages	• 12 (3)
	• 13 (1)
	• 14 (2)
	• 15 (1)
	• 16 (2)
	• 17 (2)
Gender	6 participants were male
	5 participants were female
Towns or cities represented in group	Post Falls (2)
represented in group	Coeur d'Alene (6)
	• Rathdrum (1)
	2 participants did not state where they lived
Library usage within group: number of visits	• 3 (1)
within past two years	• 4 (1)
	• 5-6 (2)
	• 7 (1)
	• 8-10 (3)
	• 12 (1)
	• 40 (1)
	• 100 (1)

## GROUP FOUR (COEUR D'ALENE 18-25)

Number of Participants	• 11 participants
Ages	• 18 (1)
	• 19 (3)
	• 20 (3)
	• 22 (1)
	• 23 (1)
	• 24 (2)
Gender	6 participants were male
	5 participants were female
Occupation	6 participants were college students (various colleges)
	1 participant was a construction worker
	1 participant was a carpenter
	1 participant was a pre-school aid
	2 participants did not state their occupations
Library usage within group: number of visits	• 1 (1)
within past two years	• 5 (2)
	• 8 (2)
	• 10 (2)
	• 50 (1)
	• Over 100 (1)
	• Once per week (1)
	• 4 times per month (1)

## **GROUP FIVE (BOISE 12-17)**

Number of Participants	• 11 participants
Ages	• 12 (4)
	• 13 (3)
	• 15 (1)
	• 16 (1)
	• 17 (2)
Gender	6 participants were male
	5 participants were female
Towns or cities	• Boise (8)
represented in group	3 participants did not state where they lived but it appeared that all live in the Boise area
Library usage within	• 2(1)
group: number of visits within past two years	• 3-4 (2)
	• 5-6 (3)
	• 24 (1)
	• Over 50 (1)
	Once every two weeks (1)
	• Once per week (1)
	• Too many to count (1)

## **GROUP SIX (BOISE 18-25)**

Number of Participants	8 participants
Ages	• 18 (4)
	• 19 (1)
	• 21 (1)
	• 22 (2)
Gender	3 participants were male
	5 participants were female
Occupation	6 participants were college students
	1 participant was a teacher
	1 participant did not state her occupation
Library usage within group: number of visits	• None (1)
within past two years	• 2-3 (1)
	• 5 (1)
	• 10 to 20 (2)
	• 24 (1)
	• 4 times per week (1)
	• Over 100 (1)

## **GROUP SEVEN (BURLEY 12-17)**

Number of Participants	• 10 participants
Ages	• 12 (2)
	• 13 (3)
	• 14 (1)
	• 15 (1)
	• 16 (3)
Gender	4 participants were male
	6 participants were female
Towns or cities represented in group	• Burley (6)
represented in group	• Rupert (1)
	Oakley (1)
	• Kimberly (1)
	One participant did not state where he lived
Library usage within group: number of visits	• None (1)
within past two years	• 1-5 (2)
	• 10 (1)
	• 20 (2)
	• 24 (1)
	• 30 (1)
	• 200 (1)
	Once per week (1)

## **GROUP EIGHT (BURLEY 18-25)**

Number of Participants	8 participants
Ages	• 18 (2)
	• 20 (1)
	• 21 (1)
	• 23 (1)
	• 24 (1)
	• 25 (2)
Gender	All participants were female
Occupation	2 participants were college students
	4 participants were homemakers
	2 participants had recently graduated from college and were pursuing jobs
Library usage within	• 1 (1)
group: number of visits within past two years	• 2 (2)
	• 5 (1)
	• 20 (1)
	• 50 (1)
	• 75 (1)
	Once per week (1)

## **GROUP NINE (POCATELLO 12-17)**

Number of Participants	• 10 participants
Ages	• 12 (3)
	• 13 (1)
	• 14 (3)
	• 15 (3)
Gender	5 participants were male
	5 participants were female
Towns or cities	Pocatello (8)
represented in group	2 participants did not state where they were from
Library usage within group: number of visits	• 2(1)
within past two years	• 4 (1)
	• 5 (3)
	• 6 (1)
	• 10 (2)
	• 20 (1)
	Too many to count (1)

## **GROUP TEN (POCATELLO 18-25)**

Number of Participants	8 participants
Ages	• 19 (2)
	• 20 (2)
	• 21 (1)
	• 22 (1)
	• 24 (2)
Gender	4 participants were male
	4 participants were female
Occupations	3 participants were college students
	2 participants were unemployed
	1 participant was a homemaker
	1 participant worked in a juvenile detention center
	1 participant was a construction worker
Library usage within group: number of visits	• 4 (1)
within past two years	• 5 or 6 (2)
	• 20 (1)
	• 30 (1)
	• 40 (1)
	• 100 (1)
	Almost daily (1)

## GROUP ELEVEN (BLACKFOOT 12-17)

Number of Participants	• 10 participants
Ages	• 12 (2)
	• 13 (3)
	• 15 (1)
	• 16 (2)
	• 17 (2)
Gender	6 participants were male
	4 participants were female
Towns or cities represented in group	Blackfoot (3)
represented in group	Aberdeen (1)
	Pocatello (1)
	• Idaho Falls (2)
	3 participants did not state where they were from
Library usage within group: number of visits within past two years	• 4 (2)
	• 6 (1)
	• 8 (1)
	• 10 (2)
	• 12+ (1)
	• 15 (1)
	• 50 (1)
	• A lot (1)

## **GROUP TWELVE (BLACKFOOT 18-25)**

Number of Participants	• 10 participants
Ages	• 18 (4)
	• 19 (2)
	• 20 (2)
	• 22 (1)
	• 25 (1)
Gender	4 participants were male
	6 participants were female
Occupations	6 participants were college students at a variety of schools
	1 participant was unemployed
	1 participant worked in childcare
	1 participant was a nurse
	1 participant worked for a computer recycling company
Library usage within group: number of visits	• 3 (1)
within past two years	• 4(1)
	• 10 (3)
	• 25 (3)
	• 50 (1)
	• Over 100 (1)

#### DETAILED FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The comments and opinions of focus group participants are presented in this section in conjunction with the general discussion topics pursued by the facilitator and in the general order in which the discussions occurred. Specific focus group findings are detailed in this section, with direct comments noted in quotations wherever possible. Opinions from the younger and older digital native groups are reported separately to show the differences, where they exist, between these segments. Regional differences are also noted at the end of each section, when appropriate.

#### FREE TIME ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT

In the first part of the group discussion, participants were asked to state whether or not they felt that they had free time available. They next explained what they did in their free time. The discussion then shifted towards talking specifically about entertainment, and finally, what types of technology the participants were likely to use on a daily basis.

### YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

Participants in the younger groups were asked to describe their free time activities and their daily use of technology.

The amount of free time digital natives have depends on the individual. In each group, participants expressed that they had varying levels of free time. Younger members of the groups typically had more time available, although those students who participated in organized sports, or took music or dance lessons outside of school, tended to have less free time. One young participant stated, "During the school year there's sports, clubs, activities and all that kind of stuff." Another person explained, "I play a lot of sports and so I consider that my free time so I enjoy it a lot."

When individuals have free time, it is usually in the evening. In several groups, participants of all ages commented that when they did end up having a few hours to do what they wished, it was frequently in the evening. Organized activities typically took place immediately after school causing most of the free time to be available later in the day.

High school students generally feel that they have less free time than they did when they were younger. The older participants (16 or 17 years old) in these groups frequently expressed that they were much busier than they had been when they were younger. Responsibilities like school and part-time jobs consumed much of their time. One participant explained, "I find that as you get older, you don't have very much free time because you have a job and everything." In a different group, a person commented, "I don't think you have free time in high school. I go to school online (takes some classes online), and to school, and have two jobs."

Digital natives enjoy a variety of activities in their free time, some of which involve the use of technology. When participants were asked what they liked to do with their free time, they named numerous activities. Comments from group members included:

- "Hang out with my friends or go BMXing or something."
- "I just buy all my video games and beat them."

- "I go on MySpace a lot. I'm not supposed to, but I do."
- "Read and make jewelry and stuff like that."
- "I play sports with my friends."
- "I think friends preoccupy a lot of our time."
- "I like to go tubing, and go on the computer and stuff."
- "It's like there's no time for reading anymore...in your spare time, you could be at the library reading, or you could be on MySpace."
- "Mostly in my free time I'm on the computer, like on VALNet mostly. And I order books at the library, and I read a lot."

The groups described activities that they would do both by themselves and with friends. Typically, if they were doing an activity away from home, they were likely to be with friends. Activities at home could take place with or without friends, depending on the pastime.

**Digital natives rely heavily on technology for multiple forms of entertainment.** The top forms of entertainment named across all groups of younger participants were as follows:

- Movies. Renting DVDs through local stores was named as the most popular way to access movies. Participants also explained that they would buy DVDs or go to the movie theater with friends to watch movies. Netflix was also named as a way to access movies by several participants.
- Internet. The Internet was named as a major source for entertainment. The groups explained that they would go online to communicate with friends (using instant messaging or various sites), watch entertaining video clips, or to get news. One group member explained, "When I do have free time, I'm most of the time on, like, MSN messenger or something like that on the Internet, on my email, or on MySpace."

Participants would go online either by themselves or with friends; one person stated, "I do spend some time on the computer when I'm with my friends, you know, MySpace, MSN...almost everyone has a MySpace page." MySpace was the most frequently mentioned website; other popular sites included YouTube (watching or sharing funny/unusual video clips with friends) and Google.

• **Video games.** About one-half of the participants in the younger groups identified video games as a source of entertainment. Those who played said that they would usually either rent a game or buy it, although both of these were perceived to be expensive.

Interestingly, in unaided remarks, all participants stated that they watched television, but only after prompting. It was only named as a form of entertainment by two participants across all of the younger groups. This marks a difference between younger and older digital natives since the older groups considered television to be a primary source of entertainment.

Technology is used on a daily basis by all of the younger digital natives in one form or another. The groups named several tools that they were likely to use in their daily lives:

- Cell phones. Over 75 percent of the participants responded that they had their own cell phone. The groups used them for both texting and talking with their friends. Several people stated that they were more likely to text than talk. The popularity of texting could have something to do with the fact that it allows users to stay in touch when talking is not an option; for example, several of the younger participants were observed using their phones to text during the focus groups. Although texting was mentioned by the older groups, it was much more common among these younger participants.
- Computers. The majority of the participants responded that they had a
  computer with Internet access at home. These were used for the purpose of
  entertainment, as mentioned earlier, and for schoolwork.
- MP3 player/iPod. Many participants also had their own device for listening to
- Video game players. Some participants mentioned that they owned a system for playing video games.

Many members of the groups explained that they would frequently use combinations of the above tools. For example, they would use the Internet to download music onto an iPod from websites like iTunes or Rhapsody, or to "download ring tones and pictures and stuff" onto their cell phones.

#### OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)

Participants in the older groups were asked to describe their free time activities and their daily use of technology.

The amount of free time that an individual has is highly dependent on his or her lifestyle. Participants in the older groups were involved in a broad range of activities: some attended college as full-time students, others were already pursuing a career, while some had children of their own. Their answers, therefore, varied widely when they described how much free time they had.

Generally, those who worked full time felt that they did not have much time to spare until the evening hours. A woman commented, "Yeah, after work, I like to go to the casino." The college students expressed that they had plenty of free time during the summer. The parents in the groups stated that they had free time when their children were napping, but that it was typically used to get things done. Additionally, they never knew how long the child would be asleep, causing their free time to be more restrictive.

Older digital natives have a broad range of activities that they do in their free time. Like the younger digital natives, participants in the older groups naturally named multiple hobbies and pastimes that they enjoy. Comments from the groups included:

• "Go to the beach."

- "Anything outdoors, like snowmobiling."
- "Over the summers I do Ultimate Frisbee."
- "I do a lot of kayaking and climbing."
- "I like to curl up with a good Stephen King."
- "Skateboard or play video games or draw pictures."

Even those who enjoy outdoor activities and sports tend to spend some of their free time doing activities that involve technology. Despite the large number of outdoor activities named by participants in each of the groups, multiple pastimes involving technology were also mentioned. Their comments were as follows:

- "Internet, a lot."
- "Mostly I do stuff on the computer, various computer things. If I can get outdoors and do things, great, if not, I'm on the computer." (Participant explained that he enjoyed playing games or programming)
- "I try to spend some time with my fiancée, watch movies with her...play video games, whatever."
- "I'm a TV junkie!"
- "I spend a few hours a day on Facebook...I used to spend hours on MySpace, too. I write on other people's walls and keep in touch with my friends, see what events they have going on."
- "Like every time I have nothing to do at home, I'm on Facebook." (One group explained that Facebook.com was replacing MySpace as the popular communication tool)

Like the younger groups, older digital natives use technology a great deal when accessing different forms of entertainment. The top forms of entertainment named across all groups were as follows:

■ Internet. Participants were highly likely to use the Internet as a form of entertainment. One person stated, "I do like to just hang out and go on the Internet." The Internet was described as a form of entertainment because it allows participants to communicate with friends via email, or to use Facebook or MySpace as a communications tool. A man commented, "Especially on my days off, I sit at my computer and look at web pages, look at Internet sites, like MySpace."

These sites were used mainly to keep in touch with current friends, rather than to meet new people. The participants in these groups were much more likely to state that they use email to communicate whereas the younger groups tended to mention instant messaging more, and email less. Several people mentioned that

they would sometimes watch television shows online, although these groups did not talk about sites like YouTube, whereas the younger groups did.

- Movies. Movies were named as a very popular form of entertainment, and they were accessed through many different sources. Group members explained that they would sometimes go see movies in the theater, but that watching DVDs was by far the most popular way to see movies. Participants would often borrow videos from friends, rent them, or use Netflix. (Netflix was much more commonly heard in the older groups than it was in the younger groups.) One person stated, "I get mine from the library a lot because they're free."
- Video games. In each group, several people stated that they would sometimes play video games for entertainment. Sometimes games were played online, other times participants explained that they would use video game systems like Xbox or PSP.
- Television. Unlike the younger groups, the older digital natives did name the television as a form of entertainment. Many participants explained that they would typically "surf' through the channels until they found something that would entertain them for a while, or that they would watch the news.

Several forms of technology are commonly used by digital natives in their everyday lives. Participants discussed multiple tools that they use daily, and explained how they used each of them:

Type of Technology	How it's used
Cell phone	Talking (most common use), texting, and going online to check email or to get quick information, like checking movie times. Several people commented on the convenience of having Internet access on their phones. Phones were also used to transfer information among friends; several people stated, "I take pictures" or "I take videos and mail them." In both of these cases, participants were using their phones to capture the photos or videos, and then send them to friends, also via their phones. Many people mentioned that their households only had cell phones, no landlines.
MP3 players, iPods	The majority of the participants had one of these devices. Group members explained that they would use them to listen to music when walking to get somewhere, or while exercising. These were sometimes also used in the car by plugging the unit in to an adapter.
Computer	Many had their own computer with Internet access at home. As previously stated, computers were typically referred to as being used daily to communicate with friends or family (using MySpace or email), to shop, to check news updates, or to look up various bits of information like movie starting times.

#### **EXPERIENCES WITH LEARNING & INFORMATION**

In this part of the focus group discussion, the moderator asked participants whether or not they felt that learning and education were important. The groups were asked to describe how people, information, hands-on experiences, and technology each contributed to their learning processes. Participants also explained the process and sources they would be likely to use when seeking information on a variety of topics.

### YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

Participants in the focus groups conducted with younger digital natives talked about their experiences with learning and information.

Education and learning are perceived to be extremely important. The younger digital natives expressed that education was important in order to be able to succeed in life, and to communicate with others. Participants made the following comments about why learning was important:

- "Because you have to learn things before you get a career."
- "It's pretty much the only thing that we take with us that's not just an object."
- "College."
- "How else are you going to get a job?"
- "Nowadays...most of the workforce is in manual labor, so you have to have a good education to get a good job."
- "I think it's important to get a good job and learn and do cool stuff."

Education and learning are generally enjoyed, although some subjects are more well-liked than others. Individual preference defined which subjects participants enjoyed learning about; a few members of the groups simply enjoyed learning in general. One person stated, "I just like learning about stuff. It's cool." For the most part however, groups stated that they enjoyed some subjects more than others. They explained that it had to do with their level of interest in a subject, how well they understood the subject, and who was teaching it. Groups' comments included:

- "It depends on the subject."
- "Depends on the teacher."
- "It's about the energy...if a teacher seems excited about a subject, I can be excited about it also."
- "Sometimes I fall asleep because it's boring."
- "I like math because I'm good at it."

People are thought to play an important role in the learning process. Across all of the younger groups, participants expressed that teachers, friends, and classmates were important when learning. Teachers were discussed frequently in this part of the discussion; as expressed above, most people stated that a teacher could make or break a subject for most students. One group member explained, "If the teacher's boring, it makes the class boring; but if you're teacher's really interactive and makes things fun, then (it's much better)." Enthusiasm was thought to be important for a teacher to have. Participants also felt that it was very helpful for teachers to use varying methods for learning. In one group, a young lady stated, "I like teachers that change their lesson plans. They don't do the same thing every week. They do different things with it, or change it."

Teachers seemed to be perceived to be leaders in the learning process, directing the use of other learning tools addressed in this section of the discussion: written information, hands-on activities, and technology. The younger groups were already displaying their desire to learn from multiple sources at this point during the discussion, and the teacher was thought to be the person responsible for providing those sources in order to keep learning interesting.

Contributions from classmates are perceived to be very valuable, especially for the older participants among young digital natives. Students explained that they like having class with other people so that they can hear different points of view, defend their own opinions, and exchange ideas. One person stated that without having other students around, "You don't have that extra perspective that's different than your own, to learn from, too." In several groups, participants commented on the importance of having class discussions. Another person said, "Or also, there's like online classes where you have discussions...and talk to your classmates." One participant explained, "Also having classmates that are doing the same thing as you is really helpful. Like, I took an independent study this year and it turned out to be really hard 'cause there wasn't anyone else to interact with." It is interesting to note that while interaction with classmates was not specifically mentioned in the older groups, a similar idea was emulated when participants in the older groups expressed the value in being able to find input and opinions from many different people while online.

Many students like to have hands-on experiences as a part of their learning process. Learning by doing was thought to make learning more fun and memorable. One person explained that hands-on activities "make it more fun." Participants cited many examples in which hands-on or on-site experiences had helped them learn, including music classes, classes in agriculture, and even business classes. Overall, the groups seemed to feel that learning by doing was very helpful as a supplement to other resources for learning. Comments were as follows:

- "It makes you feel more connected to it, so you can really understand it better."
- "I think learning's better when it's interactive, and you're not just sitting, listening to someone talk."

Having access to written information is vital when learning. When participants were asked if they felt that information played a role in their learning experiences, the response was unanimously "yes." Text books, reference books, and libraries were mentioned briefly during this part of the discussion. One person expressed, "I get most of mine (information) from books; I really like to read." Others explained that they used text books, but that materials used for class generally depended upon the preferences of the teacher.

Because the younger digital natives so closely associated technology with information, the conversation always shifted immediately to the Internet and its perceived importance (and necessity)

in retrieving information. As a result, the importance of both information and technology in the learning process ended up being discussed simultaneously in these groups.

Technology is perceived to provide fast and easy access to written information, and is therefore thought to contribute heavily to digital natives' overall learning experiences. Technology was deemed to be a vital tool for learning. When the groups were asked what tool they used most frequently, most participants agreed, "Technology. You use it everywhere. Writing and searching." Another person simply stated that they use the Internet "Because it's easy to find stuff." It is interesting to note that although the older groups placed a great deal of importance on technology when learning, they were much more likely to mention accessing information through books and magazines in addition to the Internet than were the younger groups.

Despite a heavy reliance on technology, digital natives prefer to learn from a combination of sources, and see value in each of them. When asked if people, information, technology, or hands-on experiences were more important in their overall learning experience, participants mainly chose technology, people, or hands-on experiences. Ultimately, however, the groups seemed to feel that the importance of each depended somewhat on the subject, and also expressed that a combination of sources were important. They liked the variety associated with learning from different means; and several people stated that both "technology and people" were important, and one participant explained, "I'd say the Internet because it's easy to access, but also, sometimes I go in and talk to a teacher. That's pretty important, too."

Current events and entertaining facts are most likely to attract attention. Like the older digital natives, the younger groups expressed that they were much more likely to pay attention to information that was interesting or fun. Additionally, the younger groups seemed to hone in on current events as being something to which they were likely to pay attention. Comments regarding preferred topics were as follows:

- "I don't pay attention to boring stuff." (likes to learn fun or interesting facts)
- "Music information, about my favorite bands."
- "Sometimes I have trouble keeping up with my history...if I can find a
  historical fiction novel on that time period, it sometimes gets it hammered into
  my head a little better." (entertaining way of presenting material helps keep
  interest)

Younger digital natives use traditional news sources in addition to Internet-based material in order to learn about current events. In order to obtain their favored types of information (fun facts and current events), participants explained that they would use several sources:

- **Television news.** Several participants stated that they would occasionally watch the local news.
- Newspaper. A few participants explained that they would read the newspaper daily; others were likely to check a local, online newspaper in an attempt to learn more about local, breaking news. The Virginia Tech shooting, and the Moscow, ID shooting were examples of news that had been followed through this source.

Magazines. Paper-based magazines were still used by a few participants. One young lady stated, "I think I get like six subscriptions in a month!" Several people accessed magazines online.

The Internet is usually the starting point for researching a topic. Not surprisingly, most of the people in the younger groups related searching for information to subjects that they had researched for school. When the groups were asked how they would begin looking for information, "the Internet" was the most common response. Group members explained that this was because it was much more convenient and less time-consuming than going to a library. They also alluded to the fact that when researching online, there is less actual reading involved than when using books. Participants made several comments about using the Internet for information:

- "If you have a lot of time, you can go to the library, but if you don't have a lot of time, you just use the Internet."
- "I don't like to read a lot, so I just kind of go to the Internet."
- "I used the Internet and Googled (information). It was a lot faster than going to the library."
- "(I use the Internet) not as like a serious reference source, but just as somewhere to jump off from."

Some students explained that they would use the library in addition to the Internet. Across all groups, participants stated that they often had to use the library and books, in addition to the Internet, because their teachers required them to do so. Comments concerning library use for information were as follows:

- "My English teacher wouldn't let us use the Internet so we got books, and I think I found more information and better information from books."
- "The library. I go there a lot for any kind of information."
- "You're supposed to use books. I put it off as long as possible because I'm really intimidated by the library because I don't know how it's set up."
- "The Lewiston library scares me...I just sat down at a computer when I saw it because I was more comfortable there searching for a book."
- "I went to the library (when starting a project) and just checked out a bunch of books."

At this point in the conversation, most groups began to discuss the reliability of the information they found on the Internet. Although the Internet was perceived to be the fastest and easiest way to obtain information, the younger digital natives (like the older groups) did not always trust everything that they read online. The abundance of opinion-based information posted online was perceived to be a double-edged sword. While it was good to be able to see varying opinions, it could sometimes be difficult to know whether a site was presenting opinion- or fact-based information. Comments regarding this theme included:

- "You really have to be careful...you can get so much bogus information on the Internet."
- "There is one thing I do not like about the Internet, is that people will post stuff without even thinking about it...if you're doing research on somebody, they could say they killed like 50 men, when they only killed two."

This topic is discussed further in the section entitled "Digital Natives' Perceptions: Books & Libraries vs. The Internet."

Younger digital natives employ several sites to search the Internet. Participants in the younger groups named fewer favored sites than the older groups. Google seemed to be the most favored site among the groups, and a commonly heard phrase was "Just Google it." Ask.com and Yahoo were search engines that were also frequently mentioned. Wikipedia was mentioned in every group as a quick source for more general information. Most participants seemed to like the idea of being able to access an encyclopedia online for information, as Wikipedia presents itself to be, although everyone was aware that the information on this particular site might not be accurate since anyone can make changes to it.

Several types of information can be difficult to find, despite the vast amount of information available. It was sometimes difficult for the younger digital natives to locate specific types of information. One participant gave the example of searching for information on a person about whom he was supposed to write a biography. The Internet did not bear any results, and he ended up needing to dig deeply into books in order to learn more. In a different group, a young girl had a similar experience. She explained, "Sometimes in history, you can't go and find any information on the person you're doing."

Another participant described a project for which she needed to learn about improving the environment. She tried searching for diverse information online, but was only able to find limited information. She explained, "It took me easily two weeks to find anything before I gave up and looked it up in books, because everything (online) is (about) gas and oil, and no one cares about anything else."

These cases represent limitations that seem to exist in using the Internet for searches. As expressed by the older groups, it can be difficult to find the information that is needed without knowing how to perform advanced or refined searches since information can become buried quickly as articles concerning current topics are posted. Additionally, participants explained that without knowing exactly which key words to use for a search, it could be difficult to find the desired information. For example, one participant described a situation in which he was trying to research a particular medical condition. He explained that, "Without knowing the name of the condition that's affecting people, it's extremely hard."

# OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)

Members of the focus groups conducted with older digital natives also discussed their experiences with learning and information.

Education and learning are recognized to be important, although perceptions differ slightly depending upon the lifestyle of the individual. Everyone commented on the importance of education in developing a career, broadening opportunities, and progressing in life. College

students within the groups tended to focus on school-related education, whereas those who had completed college or were not attending classes tended to think more about knowledge as it applies to real-world experiences. For example, participants who were also parents considered educating themselves to be important as it related to raising their children in the best way possible.

Overall, when asked if they considered education and learning to be important, responses included:

- "Certain subjects, whatever is of interest to me at the time, I use the Internet to find more information on that...but not necessarily going to school."
- "I guess I always try to make it important, but the education I spend more time paying attention to is preschool education." (for her children)
- "Advancement. At some point, you have to move forward."
- "Money; get paid what you're worth."
- "To better yourself as a person."
- "To give you perspective."
- "Better jobs...you always get better jobs with a degree."
- "To make better decisions, be better informed about what you want to do."
- "I want to be successful in my life...I don't want to be left behind when technology is growing."

Generally, education is thought to be enjoyable. The majority of the groups agreed that they enjoyed learning. College students were more likely to make comments similar to those made by the younger groups; that is, that the level of enjoyment links to the subject and the presentation of the material. Participants who were not in school were more likely to state that they simply enjoyed learning.

Comments from the groups concerning whether or not they enjoyed learning were as follows:

- "I love learning. It makes me feel smarter, more knowledgeable, and more powerful."
- "For me, it depends on the class." (required classes vs. preferred topics)
- "As long as it's presented in the right approach, then it's okay, but if it's just force-fed and it's dry and monotonous, then more than likely not."
- "If it's interesting stuff."
- "If it's something you're going to school for...it's something you're interested in so it just kind of furthers your knowledge and gives you more information about something you already like."

People are perceived to play an important role in education and learning. Participants commented that teachers, as well as other people in their lives, helped them learn. People were not always the only source for learning, but contributed to the learning process as a whole. Individuals once again had different interpretations of the roles that people would play in education. College students tended to think of teachers, whereas others considered how they had learned from other's opinions on products, or from role models. Various comments from the groups included:

- "I think people can be a valuable asset to learn information from, but it can also be misleading if you don't verify the information yourself."
- "I say high (level of importance), if they're people you know and trust."
- "(People are) always just a starting off point for me...I'm still going to research it more. They might be a close personal friend, but that doesn't mean they've tried seven different cleaning products."

Written information is a key ingredient in learning, but is most helpful when combined with other sources. Older digital natives related written information to technology because they access so much through the Internet. Information was likely to be used as a part of the learning process, and to be accessed through the Internet, books, and television. Each of these is discussed briefly below:

- Internet. The Internet was used frequently by almost all group members when researching a topic, or to get news. One person stated, "I get it off the Internet, that's my main source." Another participant explained, "We have a subscription to the paper here in town, but we just do it online. Our subscription is through the computer."
- Books. Books were identified as important tools for doing in-depth research, especially for school-related tasks. One participant commented, "For like research and stuff, books are good too." Still, they were perceived to be one link in the process of learning. A participant summed up the opinion of all of the groups when stating, "(Books) basically just give you a foundation to go off of...I know so much about law, but then when you go out in the real world…it's not the same as what you read in the books."
- **Television.** The television was used to obtain information, especially as far as the news was concerned. Additionally, one person made a connection between being entertained and learning. He gave the example of watching a channel like Discovery- the shows he watched started out as entertainment, but ultimately, he was getting information by watching.

It is interesting to note that although the older groups did associate accessing information with the Internet, they were much more likely to mention books and magazines as primary information sources than were the younger groups. Additionally, the younger groups barely mentioned using the television to access information.

Learning by doing is extremely important, especially for some topics. Older digital natives perceived hands-on experiences as the ultimate way to learn something, although they realize that it is not always possible to be taught this way. A participant (who was also a teacher) explained, "It seems

like when you're actually doing it with your hands, it makes a lot greater impact, but a lot of times it's impractical to get all those materials...you have to fall back to the information."

The older groups strongly related learning by doing to their real-world experiences. For example, one person explained that narrowing a career path sometimes required experiencing a job first-hand in order to know if it was the right one or not. Others discussed parenting, and how reading about being a parent is simply not the same as experiencing it. Parenting was mentioned in several groups.

Participants noted that hands-on experience was useful for learning other things, as well. One college student majoring in theater noted, "Well, with theater, that's all you ever do." Another participant used "learning how to trim horses feet" as an example; reading about it was not an effective way of learning to do it.

Technology is perceived to be extremely important for learning, but older digital natives are more cautious about relying on it completely. Most of the participants in the older groups explained that they used technology (mainly computers and the Internet) to research and learn quite frequently. Like the younger groups, the members of these groups expressed concern over the trustworthiness of information obtained on the Internet. The older groups were much less likely to want to lean entirely on technology for performing research not only because of a lack of trust, but also because they still saw value in understanding how to use other tools, such as libraries or books, as they learned new things. Ultimately however, the accessibility to information and convenience that the Internet provides caused participants to use it frequently. The groups' comments included:

- "Writing any kind of paper for college is like way easier now with the Internet because you have access to all kinds of stuff, you don't have to leave your house to get it; you can just...look it up on the Internet."
- "The Internet is the first place I look. I search the Internet like everyday."
- "I go to the Internet first...but I like to have libraries."
- "I think that technology can be a double-edged sword. I think that things like spell check, they help you when you're writing a letter, but it doesn't really teach you how to spell. And cell phones can be more like an electronic leash, sometimes. And you start to hear a lot of phrases like, who needs brains when you have batteries, in terms of math...and so I think that it can help and it can be more efficient, but...(it isn't always good)"

Additionally, several participants commented on the communication that technology allows between teachers, students, and schools. A young lady explained, "Almost every student has to have a cell phone, anymore...my school is going to start doing updates via text message, if there's ever a security concern or anything like that."

Hands-on experience is thought to be the most helpful resource for learning. The majority of the participants in the older groups expressed that learning by doing was the most effective way to learn. Technology was judged to be second-most important, mostly because it was so convenient and gave access to so much information. People were also thought to be helpful, but ranked third overall. The groups did express an appreciation for access to multiple sources when learning, but ultimately seemed to feel that doing something themselves (learning by doing) was most effective.

Digital natives are likely to pay the most attention to information that pertains to their own lives, or that which is entertaining. Across several groups, participants explained that they were most likely to take interest in news that affected them directly. One person stated that he would pay attention to "Anything that could affect what I'm doing or what I'm going to do. Mainly local things, but also on the national or international level." This was a common theme expressed by several individuals and it likely ties in to findings that will be discussed later in the report in which the groups express the desire for the library to be a location where they can find out about local news and events, and is sort of a centralized place for community information. Currently, this type of information was accessed by watching local news, or checking local newspapers.

The groups also expressed an interest in entertaining news or facts. A participant commented that he liked information that was, "Anything that's new and interesting, something I don't know." Another person mentioned that he enjoyed "Fun facts. Like entertaining stuff."

Older digital natives typically use the Internet first when beginning to search for information, while libraries are also mentioned as a source both for accessing the Internet, and to use books. All participants were asked to describe a recent situation in which they needed to find learn more about a topic, and how they went about trying to find more information on it. Topics described included a full range, from college students seeking information for papers, to individuals looking for product information before making a purchase. One young lady even described a situation in which she and her mother were trying to figure out what type of bugs they had been finding in particular areas of their home.

The starting point for the vast majority of the respondents was the Internet. Several people mentioned the library as the starting point, although they further explained that they were likely to begin their search using the Internet access available at the library. About three people began their searches for information using books.

Numerous search engines were named as starting points for these searches. The younger groups mentioned many of the same sites, although the older digital natives seemed to use a wider range of sources. The following list shows which search engines were frequently named, and the comments associated with them:

- Google.com. Google was easy to identify as the most frequently used search engine among the older groups. When seeking information, participants explained that they liked using the site because it opened the door to a wide variety of sites. One participant commented that if he were to need to know something, he'd "Just go home and Google it. I Google everything."
- Wikipedia.com. This website was discussed by every group. The groups seemed to be conflicted about their feelings concerning the site. On the one hand, almost everyone knew that the information on the site could have been posted or changed by anyone; but still, even those participants commenting that the site may not always be trustworthy were highly likely to use it. This could be due to the fact that many participants explained that Wikipedia was a good place to get a general overview of a topic, making it a good starting point for information.
- Cnn.com. This site was mentioned several times as a good source for information on current events. The participants that described using the site were typically trying to learn more about breaking news.

- University websites. Several college students mentioned that they were likely
  to access information through their university's library website. This
  information was thought to be more trustworthy than that found through
  typical search engines.
- Government websites. The information obtained through government sites was also identified as trustworthy. These were mostly used by students seeking information for papers or reports.
- Other search engines. Participants also named MSN.com, ask.com, and vahoo.com as sites that they were likely to use.

Despite the fact that the Internet provides access to vast amounts of information, there are still particular things that are difficult to find. Participants identified varying types of information as being difficult to find online, such as details on family ancestry, and sports coverage in different countries. In almost all of the older groups, people commented on the fact that even though search engines were typically very helpful, there had been times that they had been unable to find what they were looking for. Often, they expressed that some of the difficulties they were having were likely due to the fact that they were not sure how to narrow or refine a search. As a result, they would end up being referred to sites that were unrelated to what they were looking for.

# DIGITAL NATIVES' PERCEPTIONS: THE INTERNET VS. BOOKS & LIBRARIES

This section of the report aims to look further into how digital natives use the Internet, and to hone in on their perceptions of the tool. Although the moderator guide did not devote a specific portion of the focus group discussion to only the Internet, it is so commonly used by digital natives that multiple findings related to the Internet were revealed, which are worthy of reporting. Note: The findings in this particular section are not divided by age group, because the two segments' perceptions converged. Differences between the two age groups, however, are noted where they exist.

**Information on the Internet is not always trustworthy.** One major theme that emerged during the study concerned the issue of the trustworthiness of information found on the Internet.

In almost every group study-wide, participants commented that part of the reason they felt that information from the Internet was so valuable was because it allowed them to access varying opinions and view points. They were able to read feedback, comments, and suggestions from numerous people on almost every topic imaginable. Curiously, this was also identified as one of the major drawbacks in using the Internet for information. Every group explained that information on the Internet had to be scrutinized to a certain extent since its source could not always be verified.

Across all groups, participants indicated that there was a need to be cautious when using the Internet for research purposes. Both younger and older digital natives remarked that it was sometimes difficult to know whether the information that they had found was fact-based, or opinion-based. They frequently commented that it could also be difficult to identify the source of information since "...anything can be posted on the Internet." Comments included:

- "You never really know if a site is legitimate or not...anybody could put up anything on the Internet."
- "If you want to get knowledge on a particular subject, you have to use different places to get your information, you cannot trust just one."
- "If you want an objective resource, you're going to look into a book, but if you don't care how subjective an article or a research query is, then you're going to go onto the Internet."

In the younger groups in particular, participants explained that one way they would verify that the information they had found was correct was to check and see if multiple sites stated the same thing. If they were able to find several websites that stated the same thing about a particular topic, they were more likely to accept the information as valid.

The concern that digital natives have over the lack of credibility in information found on the Internet causes them to adapt their research habits according to project. Some participants expressed that they were more likely to use the Internet to research things that did not necessarily have to be completely fact-based. Generally, if they were researching something for which verification of source and fact were extremely important, they would turn to sources that they considered more reliable, like books, libraries, or information accessed through a library website. If they were looking for information that was of small consequence, the Internet was an appropriate source. Remarks from the groups included:

• "(It) depends on the subject; if it's a research paper and I don't want to think about it much, I'd probably just use Wikipedia. If it's something I'm really

interested in, where I'd want to get real credible sources, I'd probably use the librarian website."

• "For my personal life I use things like that (search engines), but if I'm doing an actual research paper for college, I'll go to the library...for factual things."

Information from books and libraries is perceived to be more reliable than that found on the Internet. Regardless of their professed use or non-use of libraries, participants repeatedly commented that information obtained from books was reliable. In fact, this spread to cover information obtained through a library, or a library website. Representative quotes were as follows:

- "Online you have to be careful because a lot of it's false, so I usually go for the books, but when going online, I just make sure it's truthful."
- "There's a website I know of...that you can actually talk to librarians...and they give you websites on information about that, and I use that a lot because it's actual real stuff, not just crazy stuff people made up."
- "If you're at a library and you find facts on something, you're for the most part going to assume it's true."
- "The computer's easiest just because it's always there, but books are more reliable because when you're researching on the Internet, you find stuff that just doesn't work, but with books it's a lot easier to find exactly what you need and it's more concrete because it had to go through more of a process (to be published)."

It should be noted that in several groups, a few participants indicated that information in books could possibly still be opinion-based, and may not necessarily be trustworthy. The overriding theme, however, remained to be that books were much more reliable.

The appearance of a site can be indicative of its credibility. Groups explained that grammatical errors and the overall appearance of a website could let them know whether or not to trust a site. One person stated that, "The lay-out of the site, if it looks more formal (then it is more likely to be trustworthy)." In both age groups, participants mentioned that their teachers had warned them about the reliability issues associated with using the Internet for research, and had suggested these techniques as one quick way to filter out extremely unreliable sites.

Additionally, there were particular types of sites that were deemed trustworthy due to **referral or reputation**. These were typically sites for which the source of information *could* be verified. These were the types of sites recognized by the groups:

- Teacher-recommended sites
- Sites associated with text books
- Look for a name that is recognizable, "Or like education sites, like for a university or a college."
- "If it's a government site or an educational site, that gives it more credibility."

- ".edu and .gov are all good ones!"
- "I use the college web pages to their library to research...it's kind of easier than checking at the library." (exemplifies the importance of trustworthiness and convenience)
- "I stick to university websites, and go through their library systems, and you get access to full records, full articles, full books."

The Internet is a convenient way to access information at, or through, libraries. Some participants explained that they would use the Internet to access libraries, as well. One person stated, "I get my information through the Internet, and through online libraries; that helps, a lot." Sites that were associated with libraries received a lot of praise in almost every group. Another participant explained, "The school signed up for a big article, newspaper, kind of information place...they had us use that to get newspaper clippings and stuff, from the Internet; it was really helpful." The popularity of these sites likely has to do with the convenience that they offer, in addition to the fact that they were recognized as trustworthy places to get information.

"And then there are some websites that let you upload thousands of books...so you can read the books online, and in the original text. And that's great because while libraries are really useful, they don't have certain books."

Generally, digital natives think of the Internet as a tool that should be offered for use by libraries, rather than as a replacement for the existence of libraries. The Internet was perceived to replace the need for access to books through the library as a primary reference tool, but not as a replacement for libraries altogether. This is despite the fact that so many people had previously stated that information online was not always necessarily trustworthy. Many people expressed similar sentiments to one participant's statement: "For research, I think (the Internet is a competitor to libraries), but for fun reading, I don't think it's competition... 'cause you can't get that on the Internet."

Additionally, on the fact-gathering side of libraries' existences, it can be noted that the desire for easy access to trustworthy information indicates a pathway for libraries in the future. Because of libraries' reputation as a trustworthy source for information, they have the ability to offer not only Internet access in their physical locations, but also to offer trusted, library-sponsored gateways to credible information online.

It can also be noted in this section that libraries were highly valued as a community tool, and that there was generally still a great desire for libraries to have physical locations. One young boy commented, "I don't think they're (libraries) going out...because a lot of people don't have Internet access and there are actually a lot of people who go there. There are little kids that hang out there." It was indicated, though, that with the accessibility that the Internet provides to information, the purpose of libraries was shifting to that of entertainment, to a kind of community center for classes, social events, and other media in addition to entertaining books. This will be further discussed later in the report.

Other comments from the groups supporting the continued existence of libraries at a physical location that incorporates technology are as follows:

- "I think a library has to have a building to call itself a library, or else it's just a website."
- "My definition of a library...would be somewhere I can access multiple sources of information...from a magazine and four different books, whereas if it were online, it would probably take more time to get all of those books...in the library I could have them all right here, (and use them all simultaneously)."
- "It's much easier to read that (real book) instead of an electronic version."
- "As technology grows, that's (computers and Internet access) also a nice addition to libraries."

A chart summarizing digital natives' use of Books & Libraries vs. The Internet is located in Appendix B.

#### GENERAL OPINIONS OF LIBRARIES

During this part of the focus group discussion, participants were asked questions that would reveal their current perceptions of libraries. Group members described what they considered to be the purposes of, and services offered by, libraries. Additionally, questions were asked in order to gauge whether the library was perceived to be a place for fun and entertainment, or a more serious place for gathering information and studying.

# YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

Participants in the younger groups discussed their general opinions about libraries.

Libraries are generally perceived to be quiet places for studying and researching. The groups were asked to state the first word or phrase that came to mind when they thought of libraries. Some of the responses are shown below:

- "Books." (frequent response)
- "Being quiet." (frequent response)
- "Silence."
- "Research."
- "Entertainment."
- "Strict old women with sticks."
- "The library is definitely more of a workplace than it is anything else."

Younger digital natives were less likely to describe the library as a refuge than were the older digital natives. The older groups seemed to have an appreciation for the quiet atmosphere offered by libraries; the younger groups seemed to feel that it was important for a library to have areas that were quiet, but felt restricted by the unavailability of areas where they could be loud if they wanted.

Most younger digital natives do not feel that a library is a place for people in their age group. In almost every group, participants expressed that it was mostly "little kids and older people" that use libraries. Even the participants who went to the library somewhat frequently agreed that they rarely saw other people in their age group while there. In this part of the discussion, the groups began to allude to the reasons why they did not feel that libraries were for them. Many groups commented on the fact that libraries typically have a "little kids' section," and the remaining books throughout the library, but no place for teens.

Additionally, activities associated with the library were thought to be designed for small children, such as summer reading programs or story-time, or various activities for adults. Public libraries were generally perceived to lack activities designed for people between 12 and 17. One participant explained, "I remember the library was way cooler when I was younger 'cause it was like...they had summer reading programs for kids that were really cool...I know several high school students that have not read a book since they've entered high school. It's like there's no encouragement to do it."

The perceived purpose of public libraries depends somewhat upon whether or not digital natives like to read as a free-time activity. It also depends on the physical attributes of the library itself. Participants who enjoyed reading in their free time were much more likely to state that libraries are a source of entertainment in addition to a means for obtaining information. The people in the groups that did not care for reading generally only thought that libraries were useful for information. Participants made the following comments when asked to explain the purpose of a library:

- "Information."
- "Entertainment. I go there to get my fiction books."
- "A place that's quiet where you can do research and stuff...without all the distractions around you."
- "I don't usually go to the library very much. If I want a book, I order it and then go there and pick it up and I'm out in like five minutes."
- "I used to use the library a lot differently 'til I moved here from California because the library that I used to go to all the time, like they had...it was as if you were in your actual den reading because they actually had a fireplace and a whole bunch of big easy chairs, and so you would just grab a book and read it in the library. But the Lewiston library, it's not really that nice just to be sitting there to read. Like all the shelves are made out of metal and there's maybe like three chairs and a couple computers, but it's not the same."
- "I like to just go and check out a book and then just read it for fun."
- "Check out books to get information, for like a paper."

In several groups, participants also alluded to the fact that the characteristics of an individual library defined whether its purpose was entertainment or work. For example, the Clarkston library was thought to be more likely to be used for relaxation or entertainment because the atmosphere was welcoming and pleasant. Libraries that had a less comfortable feel were more likely to be used only for research, or for picking up a book to take home without lingering.

Digital natives recognize that libraries offer a variety of services, but may not know about all that is offered. Participants were able to name numerous activities and services that public libraries offer. Responses included:

- Check out CDs
- Check out DVDs
- Summer reading program
- Harry Potter release parties
- Children's story time
- Check out books

- "Free high speed Internet."
- "Our library, you can go to the site and download books onto your iPod." (Twin Falls Public Library)

It should be recognized that the public libraries in the areas where the groups were conducted may offer many more services and activities than this list shows. The list represents only those services that were named by the participants.

Libraries are thought mainly to be useful for schoolwork or for access to the Internet and books. The perceived usefulness of libraries related closely to what digital natives felt was the purpose of a library. Mainly, libraries were thought to be helpful when researching topics for school, but not much beyond that, unless the participant was a recreational reader. When participants were asked if they felt that public libraries were useful to them, answers were as follows:

- "Yeah, to find information. Sometimes it's cool just to have it all, so it's nice to be able to go there (and have access to so many books)."
- "I usually don't use them unless we're in school, and then I just use the school library."
- "It gives me something to do during the summer...I can go to the library and get a book to read."
- "It can be, if my computer crashes."

In several different groups, a few participants explained that if they needed access to a library, they were likely to simply use their school library. However, school libraries were generally thought to have fewer books and resources than public libraries, and would not allow books to be checked out as long as public libraries. The preference for school libraries among these individuals seemed to be based entirely on convenience. That is, it is easier to go while at school than to make an extra trip to a public library.

Public libraries can be for both entertainment and fact-gathering, and perceptions vary according to an individual's interests. As would be expected, digital natives who liked to read felt that the library was a place for fun and entertainment in that it was the place to pick up entertaining books. The remaining participants generally felt that it was a studious environment geared towards getting work done. An important component to this perception is the fact that many people felt that libraries did not offer activities geared towards their age group. Participants commented:

- "When you're in high school, it's basically just for facts and information-gathering."
- "When you're little, they have programs where they'll read to you and stuff...but they don't really do anything for older kids."
- "Well, there are books for information, and there are books that are interesting."
- "I don't really read for fun unless I have an assignment to read."

Libraries are not perceived to be a place to go with friends. Because the library was associated with being quiet, few participants stated that they would be likely to go to a library with someone else. Digital natives who did not enjoy reading for entertainment, then, were very unlikely to head to a library in their spare time, since most of them stated that they would prefer to hang out with friends when they had free time. Furthermore, as was previously mentioned, most younger digital natives spend time with their friends when they are away from home. Comments included:

- "You can't talk in there, really; you get in trouble, so we don't go there anymore."
- "It's no fun. You can't talk to your friends in a place where it's supposed to be quiet. If there was a coffee shop inside, we'd hang out there."
- "I tried that once (going to library with friends), and we were starting to get too loud. And that was for research purposes!"

It should be noted, though, that there were some participants who had been to a library with a friend. Those who enjoyed reading were much more likely to do this. It also depended upon what the library offered. For example, two girls in Burley stated that their library was very good about offering activities that their entire community could enjoy; they had attended events with a friend in the past, such as a Harry Potter release party.

Digital natives describe a variety of things that they like about their public libraries. Participants described physical attributes that they liked about particular libraries, in addition to other aspects. Most of these positive comments contain ideas that are revisited later in the report as the groups describe what they would consider to be the ideal library:

- "The library I like has coffee, and it's open (has more space)...and you can find stuff easier than the one that's closest to me."
- "Mine's quiet and there's plenty of places to just hang out, and there's computers everywhere."
- "They have comfy chairs."
- "Our library has a lot of activities...they have the community involved, and it's a good library."
- "I like that you can check out as many books as you want."

In addition, several participants commented that it was easy to have books transferred from other libraries.

Librarians are another aspect of libraries that are well-liked. They are generally extremely helpful, although it can be difficult to access them. The younger digital natives expressed that librarians play a very important role when they need help locating a particular book, or even when deciding how to begin researching a subject. Librarians were perceived to be a kind of liaison between students and information; one participant explained that a librarian is, "A facilitator between a person and this vast place where they have no idea where something is...kind of like a curator for an art museum, they're just there to keep everything straight."

Several groups mentioned that it could sometimes be difficult to find someone to help them. It seemed to be a matter of availability. One person stated that, "It depends on if it's a busy day or not." In a different group, a participant remarked, "Usually there's more than one (librarian) because there's people that volunteer, so sometimes it's easy (to find one), but other days it gets kind of busy."

The groups also discussed what they disliked about their libraries. These were also sometimes related to physical attributes, but also touched on other issues as well:

- "When you put a book on hold, it takes forever to get there, a week and a half or two, and by that time, you don't want to read it anymore!"
- "And there's only an adult and a little kid section; I think there should be a preteen and teen section."
- "They need to make the teen section a little bit bigger."
- Environment is "very cold"
- "For me, it's hard to...find the books by yourself. It's hard to find them without a librarian."

It is interesting to note that in almost all groups, despite digital natives' desire for convenience, participants expressed that they were likely to travel farther in order to go to a library that they preferred, rather than going to a closer library that was not perceived to be as nice.

It would be helpful for libraries to stay open later in the evenings, especially on Sundays. Hours of operation were also discussed as an area of improvement. In almost all groups, participants expressed a desire for libraries to extend their evening hours. This could be largely related to earlier comments related to free time, which was most commonly available in the evening hours. Additionally, it was apparent that it is sometimes difficult for the younger participants to get a ride from their parents until later in the day. Even if they were able to get to the library before it closed, it could sometimes be difficult to achieve their goals in the short time they had before closing time. It was expressed that it would be especially helpful to have extended hours on Sundays as many participants confessed that they would often procrastinate doing their homework and wait until Sunday evening to do it. Access to a library at that time would be extremely helpful.

### **OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)**

Participants in the older groups discussed similar topics related to their general opinions about libraries.

Older digital natives generally think of a quiet atmosphere and of times past when they think of libraries. The groups were asked to state the first word or phrase that came to mind when they thought of libraries. Some of the responses are shown below:

- "Information."
- "Books."

- "The Dewey Decimal System."
- "The card catalog thing."
- "I think relaxing."
- "Distraction free."
- "Quiet."
- "Relaxing. A refuge."
- "Free Internet."
- "Old, outdated."

The purpose of a library is to provide free access to information and entertainment, as well as a quiet environment for getting things done. The older groups of digital natives generally seemed to have a more positive view of libraries than did the younger groups. Several groups expressed that public libraries were especially important because they allowed everyone to access information via the Internet or books. The quiet environment that libraries provided was also deemed important. Perceptions within the groups varied somewhat as the college students perceived the purpose of a library to be somewhat different from those that were not in school.

Comments from the groups regarding the purpose of a library were as follows:

- "When I was in college and I had a paper to write or had to do some extensive research or something, there's so many distractions at home (kids, husband, television)...it's easier for me to go down to the library...I can just sit right there and get whatever I need to get done, done."
- "A lot of information, and a place to get away...plus, a person is always there to help you so you don't waste your time."
- "Find information, for those that don't have computers...and those that like to read more than anything else."
- "As far as a purpose for the community, I would think more of the younger kids, for the summer or something."
- "It's a community source of information."

Access to machines not typically in home, like a copier or a scanner, was also mentioned as a purpose of a library by a couple of participants.

The services that the library offers are mainly related to research or activities for young children. Participants in the older groups identified access to the Internet, newspaper archives, audio books, CDs, and simply "information," as services that public libraries offer. The mention of newspaper archives was common to many groups that expressed that libraries were still the best way to access old publications.

Like the groups of younger digital natives, the older groups seemed to relate library activities and resources to small children. This was especially true for parents in the groups, or for those who had young relatives that they would take to the library for entertainment. One woman explained, "I have a stepson that's five; he's going to go into kindergarten so I'm using the library to rent books instead of buying books."

Libraries are perceived to be fun for children. The older digital natives sited multiple examples of how they had personally used public libraries for fun when they were young, or for their own children. Various comments included:

- "It can be a fun place too. We take the kids from the childcare center."
- "When I was little, my mom took me to the library for little programs and they would teach you stuff or read you stuff."
- "I baby-sit my sister's kids...that's their favorite thing to do, is go to the library and pick out a couple of books, and then if I catch them on a Tuesday, they do a story-time; they do in Blackfoot. I think kids love reading books."

Public libraries are generally perceived to be more task-related and serious places for adults, although opinions vary somewhat depending on an individual's lifestyle. Individuals within these groups related differently to public libraries. College students perceived public libraries to be more for fun, while they thought of their school libraries as being places for research and study. They did not seem to think that it would be possible for public libraries to give access to the broad range of information provided by their school libraries, and therefore, thought that public facilities should be more geared towards providing community information and activities.

• "I think it's for both (entertainment and fact-gathering); I used to go to the library everyday just to find a new book to read and to learn something new but now since I'm in school...it's more kind of (for) a purpose."

Participants who were not in school were much more likely to perceive the library as a place to obtain information, or for quiet time. It was expressed that the library was a good place to go to get things done. Like the younger groups, however, this also depended on whether or not a person enjoyed reading as a pastime, or not. Those who did were more likely to state that the library could be for fun and entertainment. Remarks from the groups included:

- "It's fun to go to the library to read a book you want to read."
- "In my opinion, it has a more serious overture, just because of the always be quiet, and don't talk..."
- "I would say it's more serious because of being quiet, and I always think of having to find stuff for papers and all of that."

Libraries are not perceived to be places that are often visited by people within the 18 to 25 year age range. Like the younger groups, the older digital natives commonly remarked that even if they did go to the library, they would not usually see many other people their own age. Groups commented:

- "I think that usually when I do go in there...it doesn't seem like my age group, my generation, you don't see a whole lot of them in public libraries. I usually see kids or a little older."
- "Our age group does not go to the library...if they're in there, they're probably either in a school library, or they're in there for school purposes."

Older digital natives are not likely to go to the library with a friend, but can envision themselves doing so, if changes were to be made. Most participants were unable to see a reason why they would go to a library with another person since, as frequently mentioned in the younger groups, "You can't really talk." In several groups, however, brief conversations took place in which participants commented that they had either been to libraries that provided environments that would make it fun to go with a friend, or that they could envision it. A young lady commented, "The thing about the library being an entertainment source, I've been to libraries where people really do go to the library because it has so much to offer. So it is possible, it's not just a place to go to study or research."

The older digital natives feel that the purpose of public libraries is shifting as technology advances and people obtain information in new and changing ways. The following responses from the groups reflect the perceived adaptations that libraries will need to make:

- "It's both...but the thing is about the factual side, people just go there because they have to. For the entertainment side, it actually has to be a decent library—welcoming—for them to go and enjoy it."
- "A library needs to say, 'Come read, stay here, have a nice day."
- "I think the computer, Internet technology is taking over, like, the information part. If people need information, they go to the computer, but not so much books anymore. I think the library is starting to become sort of more for fun."

The quiet environment that the library offers is well-liked, in addition to other aspects. In every group, participants commented that the environment that public libraries provide is important. One person stated, "It's like a different world from the outside where you can filter your thoughts because you can concentrate more." The older digital natives perceived quiet to be a positive, whereas most of the younger groups felt that the overwhelming quiet of libraries was a deterrent. Additionally, the groups mentioned the following things as positive aspects of libraries:

- **Librarians.** "You can ask them really anything, and they'll know it; you know, about a book, or something. And they want to tell you, so they're really happy to."
- Books can be transferred between libraries. "They all share the same system, though, so you can check out books from the high school...Clarkston's library is connected, also."
- **Information from libraries is trustworthy.** "You can trust most of the books that the library has."
- Online access to the library catalog (approximately half of the participants in these groups knew that this was available). "I really like that you can log on to

the catalog from your house, so you don't have to go (and find that what you want is not there)."

• Atmosphere (for some locations). "The Hayden library is really nice and big and open; it has windows everywhere and stuff. The Coeur d'Alene one isn't like that, it's really small and dark."

Digital natives can identify characteristics that they dislike about their local libraries, or libraries in general. Infrastructure complaints seemed to be mainly linked to libraries with older facilities. Participants mentioned that small parking lots were a problem associated with some libraries. In almost every group, participants could identify both a library that they liked (based on physical appearance), and one that they disliked in the area where they lived. Typically, libraries that were well-liked were open and bright, convenient to access, and were generally described as feeling larger. Two participants summarized dislikes common to many groups as they described their local libraries: "It's way too small, (and) it's really hard to get in and out of," and, "It's not aesthetically pleasing."

The length of check-out periods was also frequently commented on. Many people would either forget to return their books, or would simply not be finished with it by the time it was supposed to be returned. Linked to this complaint were conversations about late fees, which were generally thought to be "annoying." The participants who knew that they could renew books online seemed to be less concerned. Others commented that it would be helpful to be able to renew books online, and that email reminders about due dates would be especially handy.

Other dislikes mentioned by the groups were as follows:

- Hours of operation should be extended. "Sometimes, honestly, I wish it were open later...a little later would help more. I was a procrastinator when I was in high school, and didn't get homework done until late."
- More computers are needed; sometimes it can be difficult to gain access to one. "The only frustrating thing I can think of with the library is when they don't have a definite time limit on the computer, and you've been waiting for like an hour."
- Fees to purchase a library card. This was only brought up by the group in Burley, but was vehemently opposed by some participants, and deserves some mention. "I have serious issues with the library here. I was up in arms when I found out you had to pay for a library card. I could not believe that! So we go to story-time because it's free…just because of the principle of it, I'm not going to spend the \$70 or whatever it is to get a library card."

Another person commented, "I would like to go to the library, but I live in the country and I don't want to pay for a library card because I can't make it worth the money that they charge for a library card. I'd rather just buy the few books that I want and it would be cheaper than buying the card."

#### REASONS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY USAGE OR NON-USAGE

In this section of the focus group discussion, participants stated whether or not they had used their local public library recently, and explained the reasons behind their usage or non-usage. Those who had not used a library within approximately the past two years were asked what might cause them to start using one again. Participants who used libraries more frequently described their visits. They described why they were likely to go, if their goals had been accomplished during their visits, and what could be improved. The groups also discussed online libraries.

#### YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

Participants in the younger groups were asked about the extent of their library usage. This was broken down into three categories: those who had never used a public library, those who had not used a library recently, and those who had recently used a public library and returned on a somewhat regular basis.

Never used a public library.

Only one person out of all of the younger groups stated that he had never used a public library. He explained that, "I just don't need one." He did not name a specific activity that would be likely to make him start using one, but was observed taking some interest in the potential library services and activities discussed in the next section.

Have not used a public library recently (within about the past two years).

Responses within the younger groups varied greatly when they began to discuss their actual library usage.

Generally, younger digital natives who do not use the library on a regular basis are likely to use public libraries for research purposes. Usage by the participants who fell into this category fluctuated depending on school projects since these respondents were only using the library for research purposes. The students who fell into this category were likely to state that they would not use a library "unless I have to." Participants' remarks included:

- "I just go when I need to."
- "I usually go when I have to, to do research and stuff, for papers."

Usage by these participants was further diminished because most of them were likely to state that, "If it's for school, I'll usually just go to the school library." In a different group, another person explained, "I just use the school library, so it's not like I ever go out to the public one." This was often related to accessibility, and simply not wanting to take the extra time that going to the public library would require. It was easier to go to the school library.

Rural-area participants were more likely to state that they would use the school library instead of the public library because of accessibility issues. They sometimes mentioned that being able to access information at public libraries via their Internet connections at home would be extremely helpful.

Those who use the library for research only usually do not perceive the library as a place for entertainment because they do not read for enjoyment. Participants answering that they rarely went to the library frequently commented, "I just don't like to read," or expressed that they would read recreationally only as a last resort. One person remarked, "I really don't read a lot until I'm really, really bored and there's nothing else to do."

The undesirability for visiting a library can be further exacerbated by the exterior and interior appearance of the facility. When asked what changes could be made that might make them visit more often, responses sometimes referred to the physical appearance of a library. In one group, participants explained that there were letters falling off of the sign for their local library, and that, "It's really ugly from the outside." It's important to note at this point, that, although these participants made these comments about their particular library, they also expressed a desire for improvements to the facility. Rather than simply stating its faults, they made note of the appearance of the library and wished that it could be bettered.

Libraries' physical appearances were frequently mentioned when participants who had not visited a library recently were asked to suggest improvements that might make them likely to use public libraries more often.

Activities geared towards their age group might make these digital natives think about going to the library on a more regular basis. Participants commonly either alluded to, or simply directly stated that, more activities for people in their age group would make them more likely to consider using the library. A young lady stated that, "Probably more activities for younger people" would make her much more likely to visit her library. In several of the younger groups, participants agreed that, "If more people I knew went, then probably I would." These sorts of comments begin to reveal this age group's desire for the library to become a place where they could have the opportunity to interact with others their own age.

Notable at this point during the focus groups' discussions was the inability of many of the participants to think outside of the box and imagine what libraries could become. They seemed to know what would make them use libraries, but had a hard time imagining that it could ever really happen. The next section of the report, in which the groups were asked to brainstorm and imagine the library of the future, revealed a greater willingness to let their imaginations flow.

Have recently used a library, and return on a somewhat regular basis.

Younger digital natives who go to the library more frequently are much more likely to read for entertainment. The group members who fell into this category frequently stated that their higher usage of libraries was due to the fact that would go to the library "to take the books back, to get more books." The majority of these respondents used public libraries for both schoolwork, and to read for entertainment. One young lady explained that she would go to her public library, "Usually for school, but sometimes just to get books to read." There were, however, a few people

who said they would used the library, "Just for fun," in order to get entertaining books. Other comments included:

- "I'll go and maybe read a book, sometimes."
- "(I go) whenever I'm out of books."
- "I go during the summer just so I have something to do."

Suggestions for improvements from frequent library users are more related to improving current library services. These participants had several ideas for improving their experiences while at the library. As would be expected, their suggestions were more directly related to improving existing services than were the suggestions from the participants who used libraries less frequently, although some did address the need for activities that would be more appealing to their age group. Suggested improvements and brainstorming ideas from the groups were as follows:

- Improve filing methods when books are returned. In several groups, participants commented that they had returned books on time, but when they attempted to check out something different at a later time, the computer would show that their last book not been returned. They would then take the librarian to the spot where the book was filed in order to prove that it was there. They did not have suggestions to improve this, but simply noted that it was a problem.
- Increase the book selection at smaller libraries, or decrease the waiting time for books. Several groups mentioned that they liked the fact that books could be transferred between libraries, but that it still sometimes took too long to get what they wanted.
- Improve searches through the library catalog. Several groups alluded to the fact that sometimes their library's catalog could be difficult to navigate, especially when looking up books by subject. This could be due to a lack of understanding as to how to use the catalog's search engine. One person commented, "It's hard to search for books unless you know an actual title."
- The library catalog should make reading suggestions. In several groups, participants commented that it would be very helpful if the library catalog would make suggestions for other book titles to read, based on the title that was being looked up, like Amazon does. This was mentioned in the older groups, as well.
- The library should have a book mailing/delivery service. This idea arose in several groups. Participants likened the potential service to what Netflix offers; order what you want online, and have the resource delivered to you. This was also mentioned in the older groups.
- Make activities for their age group available. Even though some participants felt that their libraries offered fun activities, this clearly was not true for all locations, and even still, a broader range of activities seemed to be in demand. One participant reiterated the feeling that libraries were not for his age group when he explained, "They have a bunch of Christmas events at our

library. I never go. A bunch of old people go, pretty much...they have Santa Claus there."

■ Make coffee or food available at the library. One person commented, "A coffee stand would bring a lot of people; that's a big draw you know, just sit around and read." Interestingly, this idea was appealing to most people regardless of current library usage. Those who enjoyed reading felt that drinking coffee was a nice compliment to reading. Those who did not read for entertainment considered a coffee shop to be a relaxed environment where some socialization could take place.

The participants who fell into this category also had difficulty thinking outside of the box for improvements. There seemed to be the overriding feeling that libraries would never want to make the types of changes they had in mind, or that it simply would not be possible. For example, when one of the young boys was asked what improvements he might make, he stated, "There's a lot of things, but they probably wouldn't do them." With more prompting, he made the suggestion for a book delivery service, which most of the rest of the group liked.

It's interesting to note that out of all of these groups, most participants stated that they had used the Internet at the library at some point or another, but that it was not the main reason for going. Instead, they mainly related libraries to books. It is not known if this is because the majority of these participants had access to the Internet through other means, such as at school or by using their parents' Internet connection.

Awareness of online libraries is relatively low. Many participants were unfamiliar with the concept of accessing libraries online. In most groups, it seemed that perhaps two or three participants knew about sites that would allow them to check the status of books at library locations, renew books online, or check the due date of a book. Even one young lady that frequently used the library said, "They have those?" Another person commented, "I never knew you could use an online library."

Even fewer participants had used the Internet to access full-text articles or books online. Those who had used that type of resource had typically used such sites for research purposes. A participant stated, "I think I was writing a research paper (when I used one)." Those who had used sites to access full-text articles or books generally did not know who sponsored the site. Because of this, it was difficult to assess the usage of LiLI databases. Certainly, the name recognition was low; out of all groups, only a handful of participants recognized the name, and even fewer knew exactly what the site would enable them to do.

The Barnes & Noble Conundrum: Younger Digital Natives' Usage of Bookstores

Digital natives like the idea of giving libraries a feel similar to what bookstores offer. Regardless of their current level of library usage, most participants expressed a strong desire to have a coffee shop area available at libraries. This frequently led to a discussion about bookstores; many people attempted to draw a comparison between libraries and bookstores, and the groups were encouraged to talk about why they would be more likely to visit a bookstore for entertainment than they would a public library.

Even those who don't typically read for fun state that they use bookstores as a source of entertainment. Surprisingly, and contrary to their previous statements, these participants said that they would sometimes visit bookstores to get coffee with friends and look through magazines or books. This was despite their earlier comments in which they stated that they simply did not like reading. The fact that environment plays a large role in drawing digital natives is supported by the following comments:

"I would be more likely to chill there than I would at a public library."

"The atmosphere...it's not as old."

"You can be louder."

"I always think of Hastings (Bookstores) as like the ideal library."

Access to multiple types of media is another appealing distinction of bookstores. As previously noted, digital natives like to be able to use technology for entertainment. This is apparent in their use of bookstores, as well, as many participants commented that another reason that bookstores were fun was because they had access to music; they frequently had music stations where CDs could be sampled.

The connection that digital natives make between how they use bookstores and what libraries could be is very strong. This was exemplified by a young girl who talked about going to visit a family member in New Mexico. She explained that they went to a "...big library called Barnes & Noble, and it's got like a music section, and it's got a Starbucks in there; it's really cool."

Until this type of environment is provided by public libraries, however, participants seemed likely to continue to perceive libraries to be a place for information, for gaining access to books that they would not likely buy and would only need for a limited amount of time. One participant stated, "If I were looking for books that I probably wouldn't buy, I'd go to the library...something I wouldn't want to own."

# OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)

Participants in the older groups were asked about the extent of their library usage. This was broken down into three categories: those who had never used a public library, those who had not used a library recently, and those who had recently used a public library and returned on a somewhat regular basis.

Never used a public library.

Everyone in the older groups had been to a public library at one time or another.

Have not used a public library recently (within about the past two years).

Those participants who had not recently used a public library named several reasons why they did not typically go. The responses often depended upon what they were doing in life.

College students are likely to perceive libraries as a place for academic purposes. (They would often forget that the topic at hand concerned *public* libraries, not their school libraries). Since the focus groups took place in late June, most college students explained, "I'm not in school now; I don't need to go (to the library)." Other college students explained that at this point in their lives, the library felt like a place that should be used for academic purposes. Therefore, they were likely to avoid libraries when classes were not taking place.

College students are much more likely to use their school libraries because they perceive them to have many more resources. One student stated of his school's library, "It's bigger, it's got more in it...seems like there are a lot more librarians working there." They frequently doubted that local libraries would ever have the amount of access to reference resources that college libraries provided.

Although they doubted the necessity of public libraries for academic research purposes, however, college students still recognized value in public libraries. They seemed to mainly perceive public libraries as sources of entertainment: That is, valuable places for community events and social interactions to take place. Additionally, several participants who were college students commented that college libraries were not good sources for fictional materials; they lacked a selection of entertaining reading options. Therefore, public libraries were important because they provided entertaining reading materials, as well.

Even some digital natives who are not in school perceive the library to be for informational purposes, only. The participants who fell into this category expressed that they had only really used the library to obtain information. The Internet now acted as their main source for information, so they could no longer see a reason to go to the library. One participant explained that he had "mostly used it (the library) for the Internet the past few years," and when he finally bought a computer for himself, he just didn't need to go anymore. Other comments included:

- "I didn't need to look up any information, so I didn't need to go."
- "It's easier just to look it up on the Internet."
- "(The last time I went was my) senior year of high school because I was researching a paper and I was required to have some books for some references."

Digital natives who enjoy reading as a pastime sometimes find other sources for leisure books that they prefer to libraries. The library receives some competition from bookstores and other outlets for buying books, as well. A young lady remarked, "I mainly used the library to check out books for entertainment, but recently I'll just order them on Amazon, or just go to Borders and

buy it." This reiterates the importance of convenience and environment, key themes for both the older and the younger digital natives.

Some digital natives express that they might enjoy some of the activities offered through the library, but do not go because they are unaware of the events. A problem commonly mentioned by participants in the older digital native groups was that they simply did not know what was going on at their public libraries. One of the women commented, "Maybe if I knew more about the kids' things that were going on, (I would take mine to participate)." Other comments concerning this topic were as follows:

- "Maybe a commercial for the library (would be helpful)."
- "Their advertising isn't very good; the only advertising you ever see is when you're at the library."

Making libraries more like bookstores would be very appealing to older digital natives. At this point during the conversation, several groups branched off into talking about how libraries could make themselves more appealing. Both the college students and non-students in these groups drew a connection between their usage of bookstores to their usage of libraries, and began to parallel the two when trying to determine what would draw them to libraries, since most of them did visit bookstores.

Most of the conversation took place among the participants who reported that they had not used a library recently. It should be noted that many of these were college students who, as previously stated, perceived public libraries to be places for entertainment. Many of their comments were similar to those expressed by the younger digital natives. Several remarks from the groups were as follows:

- (Put coffee shops in libraries) "Yeah, like bookstores have Starbucks in them, Barnes & Noble."
- "Well, sometimes I go to Borders because they have a little café there, and just get a coffee and sit down and flip through some books. It would be kind of cool if the library had a little café."
- "I like the bookstore myself; you can see the covers, just to hang out and scan the books and stuff like that."

Have recently used a library, and return on a somewhat regular basis.

Older digital natives who frequent the library typically go because they enjoy reading. Recreational reading was the top reason that digital natives falling into this usage category would go to the library. In most groups, at least one or two people expressed that they enjoyed reading, and would use the library "for something to read" instead of having to purchase books. One woman explained, "Mostly entertainment. That's the only reason I really go there." Those who enjoyed reading commonly stated that their typical library visit might include just browsing through the books, being able to use the Internet if they needed, and finally, checking out books.

The library is a popular place to take younger relatives for entertainment. Older digital natives who reported using the library very commonly remarked that it was because they had children

in their lives that they like to take to public libraries in order to entertain them. This reinforces the perception that libraries are for young children. The adults in these groups tended to generalize that all children love books, and enjoy trips to the library. The kids would typically be taken in order to choose some books to check out, or to listen to someone read a book at story-time. Participants' comments included:

- "They have a little computer for little kids to play on, and she has like 18 books when she walks out of there...we go about once a week because she loves the library." (This participant took her little sister to the library)
- "I was baby-sitting my niece and nephews...I decided that would be an easy way to entertain them for a couple of hours, and they love it. I usually go read a magazine or something."

Other participants also mentioned taking children to the library. One woman worked in childcare and explained that they would sometimes take trips to the public library. While the children selected books or listened to a story, the activities that the older digital natives took part in varied. Some of the adults would stay with the children the whole time. Others stated that they would read articles in magazines, and a few explained that they would look for books of their own.

Older digital natives have numerous suggestions for improvements that libraries could make in order to draw more visitors. Unlike in the younger groups, the older participants were able to make quite a few suggestions by thinking outside the box. Suggestions ranged from improvements to libraries' physical locations to services and activities that could be offered. These suggestions came from participants with varying levels of library use as the conversation became a mini-brainstorming session. Brainstorming/top of mind suggested improvements from the groups were as follows:

- Modernize library appearances. One participant summarized a theme that appeared in all groups when he stated, "I think the library needs a new look. Libraries right now look so boring. But if you go to the library in Salt Lake, that library is an experience to go to. It's big, it looks good, it's appealing to your eye." Making libraries more open, brighter, and more interesting was commonly heard throughout the groups. One person suggested, "Make it more colorful."
- Designate areas where talking and socializing are acceptable. Every group suggested having different areas in the library so that the quiet, studious environment could still exist in libraries, but be separate from places for more social activities. One young lady explained, "I think (quiet) can be (good)…if your goal is to go there and study. If you're just going and browsing, it makes me a little bit antsy."
- Divide the library into sections for different types of activities. One group further discussed the Salt Lake library as an example of the above concept. A participant stated, "And then there's different levels for like, law, there's a law level where there's nothing but law books so you can tell that's a more serious environment...so if you need to get information, you can go to a certain floor, or if you want to pick up a book and go hang out with your kids while they're getting something to read, you can go to a different floor. It's just kind of like divided more into what a person would need, and it's more organized."

- Provide multiple copies of new release books. Participants noted that it could sometimes be difficult to check out newly published books because they were in such high demand. One young lady explained, "I always want new release books, and they're never there. I think also, that might be another generational thing, instant gratification. I'm not willing to put my name on a list and wait for anywhere from days to weeks for a book. I'd rather just shell out the five, 10, 15 dollars and then resell it."
- Make a video/media viewing room available. This is similar to the younger groups which suggested making media stations available for use. The existence of a room would allow multiple people to review materials at once, without disturbing others.
- Library catalog should make reading suggestions like the Amazon website does. Several older groups made this suggestion, as did several of the younger groups. One participant explained, "I use a lot of the features on Amazon…if you like this, then try this." She went on to state that she liked to check reading lists posted by other readers, in order to see what they recommended.

Several other recommended improvements included: Provide comfortable, modern furniture; stay open later for better accessibility, especially on Sundays; and offer conference rooms and meeting spaces with wi-fi available.

For some college students, public libraries offer an additional place for studying and doing homework. The perception that libraries provide a quiet, studious environment was a positive for some people. Some college students stated that they would use public libraries as an additional place for studying or completing assignments. This relates to the idea that libraries are good for completing tasks; they are places to get things done without distraction. One person commented, "I was just translating a small paper...at the library, you know you're on a mission and you need to accomplish that mission before you go home."

Awareness of online libraries is low among older digital natives. Similar to younger digital natives, only a few of the participants across all groups were aware that library catalogs could be accessed online. Most people also did not know that books could be held or renewed online. Those who had used this type of website had only positive things to say about it.

Students currently in college, or those who have recently graduated from high school, are more likely to be familiar with websites that provide access to full-text articles. Most likely because these types of sites would typically be used as references for papers or reports, students were more familiar with them than non-students. It was perceived by some college students, however, that a public library system would not likely have the resources available to provide access to as many texts as a university would. One person stated, "I think the public libraries would have a hard time with having the resources to accomplish a full online library like the universities do." Although no one contradicted this comment during the discussion, it should be noted that participants typically within the 16 to 19 year old age range (current upperclassmen or recent graduates from high school) mentioned having access to full-text articles through their high schools.

While younger digital natives did not commonly know the source of the full-text sites that they were using, older digital natives seemed to be more aware of how they were gaining access to articles. Among the six older groups, about nine people knew LiLI databases by name, and were able to

briefly describe what it was. The source of the databases was still unknown by most participants, which seemed to associate the website with their high school or college. Participants commented:

- "It is wonderful, if you're looking up old newspaper articles..."
- "Writing on the Internet; CSI has it."
- "Yeah, it was at my high school...I think it was just a database that the school provided."

Some older digital natives living in rural areas perceive online libraries to be a service associated with libraries in larger cities. In several groups, participants alluded to the fact that smaller libraries most likely would not have the resources to put many of their suggestions into action. Additionally, one young lady stated of online libraries, "That might be more of a big-city thing; I'm not sure if Rupert (or other small libraries) has a website."

#### TRADITIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES & THE INTERNET

In this section of the focus group discussion, participants talked about their preferences for more traditional services available at a library. Participants were initially asked to describe the role of different resources (such as books, magazines, or the Internet) in their lives, and whether or not they would be likely to use these resources at a public library.

# YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

Participants in the focus groups conducted with the younger digital natives discussed their preferences for traditional library services (e.g. books, newspapers and magazines, etc.) and whether or not they would use these services in their local library. Internet service at libraries was also considered. Participants' feedback is summarized as follows.

Books for reference and research are most frequently sought. As previously mentioned, the types of books that an individual would be likely to use at a library depends on their personal preferences for entertainment. Reference books and books to be used as research tools were most frequently sought at public libraries.

Those who used books for entertainment would also sometimes use the library. However, some competition with bookstores existed in this arena. Across several groups, participants explained that they would also be likely to look for books in stores. The sentiment expressed in the following statement was representative of the way that multiple participants felt: "I usually go to the library, or I'll go to Barnes and Noble and sit there and read some of it; if I like it, I'll just buy it." This was sometimes preferable to having to worry about due dates and late fees. Others borrowed books from friends. A young lady explained, "I wouldn't use the library to get books for what I personally read because usually I get them from people who say, 'This is an amazing book, here you go.' Unless it's for research, I have no reason to go to the library."

Magazines and newspapers usage appears to be tied to the library's environment. Magazines were reported to be a source of entertainment. The use of magazines at libraries seemed somewhat limited, however. This probably leans on the issue of environment since it was stated that magazines could not be checked out and had to be used at the library. Without a good environment, it was not appealing to stay at the library to do such a thing. This is further supported by the fact that many participants said that they would be likely to go to a bookstore to flip through magazines.

Newspapers were generally used to access local information like weather, or upcoming events. Participants stated that they would be likely to use the library to access newspapers from other locations, "like for big-city newspapers and stuff."

Libraries were perceived to be the best place to access past issues of magazines and newspapers. The Internet was not thought to provide access to publications beyond a few months old, and naturally, bookstores would not carry this type of information. This accentuates the library's reputation as a research/archival facility.

Movies at libraries are perceived to be old or not relevant to younger digital natives. Although the majority of the participants were not likely to look for movies at the library, those who had located at the selection were sometimes surprised by what they found. One person commented,

"It was surprising, because they had movies I really wasn't expecting to see at the library. So there's actually really good movies there, not just really old, crazy ones like you'd expect, I guess."

Still, the perception remained that public libraries would typically carry foreign films, Disney movies, or PG-rated movies. Most of the younger digital natives, therefore, were likely to rent or buy the movies that they wanted to see.

Music is most commonly sampled at, and then purchased from, bookstores. The younger digital natives typically did not turn to the library as a source for music. They were much more likely to purchase CDs or buy songs from iTunes, but only after listening to them online first, to make sure that they liked them. This ties into the earlier comments about bookstores, and that part of the reason that they were so appealing was because they provided listening stations to check CDs before buying them.

Music at libraries was not perceived to be anything that young digital natives would enjoy. One participant that had looked at the music available from his local library explained, "Classical, jazz, something that's been around for 60 years or something. It's not organized that well. Usually it's just categorized by genres, it's not labeled by name or year or anything like that."

**Libraries may offer faster Internet access.** Digital natives who did not have Internet access at home stated that they would sometimes use public libraries to check their email. Occasionally, participants would comment that they might use the Internet even though they did have access at home because, "The Internet at the library is way faster than the Internet that I have."

A few participants expressed that they preferred to use the Internet at the library because they were less likely to become distracted by the social aspects that the Internet offered, like MySpace, or using Instant Messaging. This was due to the studious environment that the library offered.

# OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)

In group discussions, older digital natives also discussed their preferences for traditional library services (e.g. books, newspapers and magazines, etc.) and whether or not they would use these services in their local library. Internet service at libraries was also considered. Participants' feedback is summarized as follows.

**Books for reference are desired.** Of those participants who used books, many stated that they would be likely to go to the library to access them, especially if they were reference books. The term "reference" also encompassed books that might be used as a resource to help fix a car, for instance. Participants also associated classical literature with the library, and stated that they would be likely to check out classics from the library.

Interestingly, new releases and more modern books were less associated with the library, although members of the groups explained that they would use libraries or bookstores in order to access these. Some participants also said that they would sometimes purchase books online through sites like Amazon.

A few participants mentioned purchasing used books through small bookstores, although this was less frequently mentioned than was *selling* used books through bookstores.

Magazines/Newspapers are browsed in a comfortable environment. A little over half of the participants in the older groups reported that they read magazines. Often, readers would just skim through articles. A few people stated that they would use the library to access magazines, mainly if it were something that they did not want to purchase. Several participants described going to a bookstore to flip through magazines. One person explained that he would, "Just go to Barnes & Noble and sit there and read, (then) leave, and not buy it." This is another example of how digital natives use bookstores as they would libraries. A participant stated, "Besides coffee and stuff, you have a music section...you use it as a library, but you just can't check it out." Another person agreed, remarking, "It's a more comfortable atmosphere at the Barnes & Noble."

Some of the participants stated that they read the newspaper. Only a few people elaborated to explain that they typically read the local newspaper.

In several groups, participants commented that they would typically use the library to access older issues of newspaper or magazines. This is similar to the younger groups in which participants also identified the library as a good place to get past issues of both of these types of publications.

Digital natives get music from the Internet and are not likely to check out music from the library. The library was not a common place for digital natives to access music. Participants were much more likely to download music from sites like Rhapsody or iTunes, or would simply purchase CDs. The few participants that had looked at the library music selection expressed that, "It's kind of a mixed bag." They explained that there was a mix of folk or classical music available there. One person stated, "I wouldn't go there to get newer music."

It is interesting to note at this point that neither the younger nor the older participants seemed to express the desire to check out CDs from the library. When they mentioned music, it was typically a desire to have music stations or areas with headphones where music could be listened to, if wanted.

Movies at the library are perceived to be outdated. The library was not a likely source for digital natives to access movies. Participants would frequently buy or rent their movies, using businesses like Netflix, Redbox, or rental stores. Movies available for rental at the library were perceived to be very outdated, for young audiences, or covering unusual topics; one participant mentioned that he had rented a DVD about Japanese craft supplies just because it was different.

Accessing movies at the library was also thought to be inconvenient. One young man explained, "They're (libraries) not open late enough (to rent movies); I'm not going to go in the morning to pick up a movie I want."

**Internet access.** Some participants explained that since they had Internet access at home, they would not be likely to use libraries for Internet access unless their computer was down, or their own connection was running slow.

On the other hand, participants discussed the advantages of using the Internet at the library. They named several reasons that they might go to the public library to use the Internet:

■ Environment. "It tends to be more peaceful there (at the library)." This comment ties into the perception that it can be easier to get work done at libraries because of the environment it provides. This also applies to Internet use, when it is necessary to get work done.

- Access to wi-fi is convenient. One participant explained that his library provided wi-fi, so he was likely to bring his laptop to the library in order to gain Internet access that way. He said, "Even though I have a laptop, I still use the library because they have free wi-fi." Many of the older groups that did not have libraries with wi-fi mentioned that offering wireless Internet access would be a very helpful service for libraries to provide.
- **Absence of time constraints.** Several participants alluded to the fact that the library was an excellent place for access to multiple materials because they knew they could stay as long as they needed. A young lady explained this sentiment well when she stated, "The other thing that's nice about the library that you can't do at other places is you can literally stay for endless hours, whereas if you go to a coffee shop or to Hastings (Bookstore), it's kind of loitering after a while." (It was recognized that libraries frequently have time limits on Internet use, but this was an important point, and would not be a problem in libraries providing free wi-fi for those with laptops.)

Rural participants were much more likely to state that they would use their public library to access the Internet. Digital natives in these areas seemed to either lack the ability to have Internet access at home, or did not receive reliable service where they lived. It was also much more common for the groups in more rural settings to comment that their libraries did not have enough computers, and that there was typically a long wait to use them.

#### LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE

In this part of the focus group discussion, both age segments of digital natives in this study discussed potential library services and programs that can be incorporated in libraries in the future.

In terms of the group process in this section of the discussion, the moderator passed out a list of potential library services and programs. Separate lists were developed to apply to each particular age group, although there was some overlap with services. (See Appendices C and D for younger and older digital natives, respectively). Participants were then asked to circle the seven services or programs that they would be most likely to use. After participants made their choices, the moderator asked for a show of hands and tallied responses for each library service or activity. The groups proceeded to discuss the more popular choices and talked about how these services or programs could be incorporated in order to increase library attendance.

A similar process was followed upon handing out a second list, which addressed web-based library services and resources (Appendix E). In this case, participants were asked to circle their top six choices. The same list of web-based library services was used for both age groups.

### YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

When asked to select their favored activities from a list of possible Library Resources and Activities, the younger digital natives selected from among the activities listed in the table below. As mentioned above, participants in each group were given a sheet with these activities and were asked to circle their "top 7" that they would enjoy the most if delivered by a library. Then, the moderator asked for a number of votes for each activity. The table below shows a ranking of services by participants across all six groups. Generally, in each group, the top three activities were discussed in more-depth. A brief description or discussion about each of the more popular choices is given below the table in each group.

POTENTIAL SERVICE OR ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF TIMES SELECTED
Friday Afternoon Teen Movies	39
Coffee Shop Area	38
Battle of the Bands Events	31
Digital Photography Club	29
Used Media Swap (Books, CDs, DVDs, Video games)	29
Video Game Checkout	26
Videogame Club – Play videogames on a large projector screen (X Box, etc.)	25
Amateur Comedy/Improv Events	24
SAT Preparation/Practice Sessions	22
Computer Game Room	22
Weekly Game Room – Play against others (e.g. Sodoku, Uno, Risk, Clue, Monopoly, Pictionary)	17
Arts & Crafts Club	16
Volunteer Opportunities (for summer)	16
Book Club	14
Homework Assistance/Tutoring (On location)	13
Teen Poetry Group	11
Knitting, Sewing, Embroidering, Quilt-making Club	11
Writer's Group	11
Homework Assistance/Tutoring (Online)	9
Anime & Manga Club	7
Chess Club	6
Make a Zine	4

The table above shows that the top choices for library services or activities after votes from all groups were aggregated include:

- Friday Afternoon Teen Movies
- Coffee Shop Area
- Battle of the Bands Events
- Digital Photography Club
- Used Media Swap

Each of these, along with a few other popular choices, is discussed in more detail as follows.

Friday afternoon teen movies make a library feel more social. This was the most popular choice among the younger digital natives. Participants felt that events like this would make the library feel "more social." This was something they would probably go to with friends, and would enjoy meeting other people while there.

Teens expressed, though, that "They'd have to show good movies." One person explained, "I chose it because it did say teen movies, 'cause I don't want to go in and watch, like Spongebob or something." All groups expressed that teens should be involved in making the movie selection; several people suggested, "Maybe they could like get opinions from the young adults that come in, make a poll and see what movies they like."

When the groups talked about this activity, they tended to discuss the fact that they felt libraries should have rooms or areas available for different types of activities; in this case, for example, rooms for entertainment where it would be okay to be loud.

A coffee shop area provides a relaxing and social atmosphere. A coffee shop was selected as a favorite by both age groups of digital natives. Digital natives seem to readily associate drinking coffee with relaxing; they were likely to enjoy a coffee drink alone with a book, or in a more social setting with friends. This is probably why both age groups were so interested in having both a loud and quiet environment at a library. Building on this fact, it's important to note that although several people remarked that a simple coffee stand is nice, a small area for "hanging out" and drinking the coffee would be preferable. Participants commented:

- "Coffee and books, that's just the best thing, relaxing with a book and drinking a coffee...I don't know, the coffee's just nice."
- "You could go with friends!"
- "You just kind of associate one with the other, like, books and coffee. We like it that way."
- "I think the coffee shops look really modern (in their) interiors, and (have) comfy chairs." Followed by agreement from another participant: "I wish the library was like that."
- "It's very fitting of like, a laid-back kind of library."

In several different groups, participants also commented that having coffee available would encourage people to stay longer. They pointed out that even grocery stores now have coffee shops inside, and thought that this might be an attempt to get customers to feel comfortable and walk around longer than they would without a coffee drink to enjoy.

Battle of the Bands events encourage social interaction among younger digital natives. A Battle of the Bands event was thought to be a good opportunity to get out with friends and meet new people. A young girl stated, "My friends love music; it would be cool to hear it in person instead of just on a CD." Even in larger cities, participants commented that a big event like this would be a good way to meet people because it would allow youths from all different types of communities to meet. Participants felt that it would be important for people their age to have input about the type of music that would be played at the event. Some people suggested posting signs and banners to encourage local bands to sign up.

A digital photography club provides a valuable resource. Several groups suggested that since the software for manipulating photography is so expensive for one person to buy, it would be a very good idea for the library to invest in something like Photoshop to make it accessible by younger people. Additionally, the library could give digital natives a chance to get together in groups to use the software. This was appealing because it would provide opportunities to meet new people, and, "You could exchange ideas, make them (your photos) better." One participant also commented, "I think lots of people of different ages would enjoy it."

A used media swap is valuable and also provides social interaction. This was also selected as a favorite by both age groups of digital natives. Most groups seemed to think that this would be an event that could take place every once in a while, probably no more than monthly. It was thought to be a good way to "Get rid of your old CDs" and for "Getting new CDs." Participants also mentioned wanting to exchange video games, movies, and books. This, too, would be a good way to meet people with similar interests; one young lady commented, "Anytime I can meet new people, I like to do it."

Video game checkout helps younger digital natives try a game before they buy it. Participants seemed to have a difficult time imagining that they would ever be able to access video games at the library, but expressed that if such a service were to become available, it would definitely be used. The appeal lay in the fact that they would be able to get, "Free video games!" since rental is typically quite expensive. Several participants agreed when a person stated, "You could try it before you buy it." The idea that renting video games would be helpful preceding a purchase was probably due to the fact that most participants explained that it could sometimes take a while to "beat" a video game, and checking it out from the library would not likely allow enough time to accomplish this.

Video game club (25). This was a popular choice because participants expressed that it would be nice to "have a place to get together" to play against one another. Most of the groups envisioned the opportunity to "Play it on a huge screen!" One group even suggested that the library could occasionally host competitions with prizes for winners. As was the case with teen movies, participants made certain to state that people their own age would have to have input about which video games were chosen to be played by the club, to make certain that the most popular games were being played.

# OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)

When asked to select their favored activities from a list of possible Library Resources and Activities, the older digital natives proceeded through the same process described above for younger digital natives. They first selected from among the activities listed in the table below. As mentioned above, participants in each group were given a sheet with these activities and were asked to circle their "top 7" that they would enjoy the most if delivered by a library. Then, the moderator asked for a number of votes for each activity. The table below shows a ranking of each library service after considering votes by participants across all six groups. Generally, the top three activities were discussed in more-depth in each group. A brief description or discussion about each of the more popular choices is given below the table.

POTENTIAL SERVICE OR ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF TIMES SELECTED
Meeting/Study Rooms	32
Jobs & Career Information	27
Used Media Swap: Books, CDs, DVDs, Video Games, etc.	25
Coffee Shop Area	25
Foreign Language Classes	24
Book Club/Reading Program	21
College Resources	20
Arts & Crafts Classes	19
Government Information	18
Amateur Comedy/Improv Events	17
Video Game Checkout	16
Computer Classes	15
Reference Information	13
Local History or Genealogy Information	13
Personal Finance/Budgeting Classes	13
Business Information	11
Writer's Group	11
Battle of the Bands Events	11
Consumer Product Information	6
Computer Game Room	6
Knitting, Sewing, Embroidering, Quilt-making Club	5
Literacy Classes	5
Speed Dating Events	3
Videogame Program for Adults	1

The table above shows that the top choices for library services or activities after votes from all groups of older digital natives were aggregated include:

- Meeting/Study Rooms
- Jobs & Career Information
- Used Media Swap
- Coffee Shop Area
- Foreign Language Classes

Each of these, along with a few other popular choices, is discussed in more detail as follows.

Meeting/Study Rooms are useful for groups of older digital native students and for local groups. Small-scale meeting rooms were popular among most of the older digital native groups. It was thought that these would be extremely useful both for students that wanted to study, and for local groups looking for a place to meet. One young man commented, "There's various public groups that I know that it's sometimes a challenge to find a good place to get stuff done without distraction." The environment at the library was thought to be helpful in helping students "buckle down" to get work or studying completed.

Job and career information serves a need among older digital natives. Many groups thought that this service would be extremely helpful; most participants had interpreted this to be help learning about different types of careers, and how to pursue them. One person suggested that the library could give access to career assessment tests to help people narrow down their job searches. College students typically commented that it would be helpful for them to understand what types of careers they could pursue with their chosen majors. Comments from participants included:

- It would be interesting "Just to learn about different careers."
- "It could be more of a personal thing instead of just going online and reading about it."
- "Learn more about something you think you might want to do."

A used media swap is desired for its practical value. This was selected as a favorite by both age groups of digital natives. Most participants could envision having a swap occasionally, not any more than once a month. They liked the idea of saving money by accessing new music, books, movies, and video games in this manner. It was also suggested that this would be a good way for the library to gain exposure to the community. A participant stated, "It would bring a ton of people to the library and it would be very fiscally responsible."

A coffee shop area in a library offers a connection between reading and drinking coffee. This was also selected as a favorite by both age groups of digital natives. Like the younger groups, older digital natives seemed to draw a strong connection between reading books and drinking coffee, and also thought that "It would turn the library more into a place where you would go hang out" and "would make it more comfortable." A young lady commented, "I could stay for hours!" Some participants seemed to feel that the coffee shop would be a good way to draw people in, and the library and its sources of entertainment would be a reason to stay there.

Foreign language classes are desired for meeting interests and practical needs. Many of the older digital natives took a strong interest in learning a foreign language. Even a college student stated, "It would be interesting to learn a foreign language outside of a classroom setting." Some people felt that it was interesting to learn about other cultures through learning a new language, and that it would help them if they were to travel. Others felt that the purpose for learning another language was very practical; in Burley and Blackfoot, participants explained that learning Spanish would help them communicate with Hispanics that lived in their areas. A nurse remarked, "Being a nurse and working in the medical field, you have to take care of everybody...it's really hard to communicate to a person that can't speak English."

Interestingly, one participant expressed that foreign language classes for small children would be very helpful. He explained that it helps with brain development and that it was much easier to learn foreign languages when younger.

A book club/reading program offers a chance to interact with, and learn from, others. Many participants expressed interest in joining a reading group. People that had been in college remarked that after graduating, it was difficult to find other people with whom to discuss books; this comment connects with the earlier finding in which it was learned that digital natives place a high value on interaction with others when learning.

This was also seen as an opportunity to find out which books others recommended. Throughout the discussions, participants were often heard commenting that they just weren't sure which books to read and would like to have reading suggestions made to them. A woman explained, "I really struggle when I walk into a library looking for a book for me to read, to know even where to start." Another woman commented that she wouldn't like having a book assigned to her because there were certain things that she did not like to read. She was more likely to prefer being given a selection of several books, and then discussing that book with others that had chosen to read it.

Scrap-booking is a potentially desired arts and crafts class. This type of program was not discussed very much within the groups; it received a high score overall, but within the individual focus groups, it was not often a high scorer and so was not discussed frequently. The group that did discuss this type of program (Burley) suggested that people in their community that have skills they would like to share with the public could teach classes. They also commented that scrap-booking was a popular activity and that the library could start a scrap-booking group once a week.

A library is perceived to be a logical hub for government-related information. Probably because libraries were identified by older digital natives as an excellent hub for community activities and information, several groups favored the library as a place to obtain government information. This included political information, such as providing details on candidates and issues before elections. In a different group, participants stated that, "It would be really nice if they had all the bills that had passed recently, and what they were...also bills that are coming up that haven't passed yet." They commented that they knew this type of information changes often, so that type of information might be easiest to keep up-to-date on a library website.

Video game check-out is a valuable service to some and provides money savings. Although this did not receive an overwhelmingly high score, it was found to be fairly popular in the Lewiston and Boise groups. The participants in these groups were enthusiastic about this type of service because "They're expensive! It's five bucks to rent, 50 bucks to buy it." They also commented, "It's tough to rent them, especially if it's just a three or five day limit, 'cause some games take longer than that (to beat)." Similar to the younger digital natives, these groups explained that

they would likely use a library video game check-out service just to try out the games before buying them.

#### WEB-BASED LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE

In this part of the focus group discussion, both age segments of digital natives in this study discussed potential web-based library services and programs that can be incorporated in libraries in the future.

In terms of the group process in this section of the discussion, the moderator passed out a list of potential web-based library services and programs (See Appendix E, which was used for both younger and older digital natives). Participants were then asked to circle the six services or programs that they would be most likely to use. After participants made their choices, the moderator asked for a show of hands and tallied responses for each web-based library service. The groups proceeded to discuss the more popular choices and talked about how these services could be incorporated in order to increase library attendance.

# YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

Younger digital natives preferences for web-based services are summarized first in this section. The table below shows a ranking of web-based services based on feedback across the six focus groups conducted with younger digital natives. Following the table, the more popular choices are discussed.

POTENTIAL WEB-BASED SERVICES & RESOURCES	12-17 AGE GROUPS
Electronic books (online, downloadable)	38
Downloadable computer games	31
E-mail	30
Electronic (online) magazines/journals	28
Downloadable audio books	25
Library website	22
Library catalog	21
Topic-specific websites	20
Library MySpace page	19
Reference tools	19
Print-on-demand books	19
Online databases	18
Podcasts	17
Ask-a-librarian service	10
Indexes to full-text journal articles	9
IM to a librarian	8
Text message a librarian	6
E-mail information subscriptions	5
RSS feeds	2

The table above shows that the top choices for web-based library services after votes from all groups of younger digital natives were aggregated include:

- Electronic Books
- Downloadable Computer Games
- E-mail
- Electronic Magazines/Journals
- Downloadable Audio Books

Each of these, along with a few other popular choices, is discussed in more detail as follows.

**Electronic books offer convenience.** This option was favored by both age groups of digital natives. The high popularity of this resource demonstrates digital natives' desire for convenience; it also exemplifies their desire for the library to shift into a site for social opportunities. Digital natives' statements indicate that they would be perfectly willing to go to the library for fun, but would rather not have to when accessing information for school assignments.

Accessibility was the main appeal of this particular resource. Throughout all groups, participants commented that it would be especially helpful to access reference books and do research online. Comments included:

- "You wouldn't have to go to the library, you could just sit there and read books at home."
- "You can get on and get right to what you want." (Indicates another aspect of
  convenience: being able to access information through a library website rather
  than using Google and needing to worry about the source of information)
- "You could print it off if you needed to." This was very appealing to many participants since they would be able to print only necessary pages rather than carrying around an entire book. Additionally, they would be able to make notes or use a highlighter on their print-out, which they were unable to do in library books.

Downloadable computer games provide cost savings and convenience for digital natives. Generally, participants really liked the idea of having a constant source for downloading computer games, although they had a difficult time imagining how libraries would be able to provide this type of service due to high costs. It was deemed appealing "So you're not going through, trying to find games online."

E-mail is a tool that helps digital natives complete various assignments. Participants liked the idea of having access to computers for the purpose of checking email at the library. This was thought to be helpful when trying to complete assignments. Quick access to email would allow them to send information about assignments or essays to themselves, to be accessed at home or at the library. Since one of the complaints that arose in several groups was the inability to get onto a computer without waiting, it might be helpful to make "express" computers available for use to those that only need access to the Internet for a short period of time.

Electronic (Online) magazines/journals are helpful for research purposes. This option was favored by both age groups of digital natives. Similar to electronic books, participants liked the accessibility that this would allow them when researching topics for school. Once again, they also liked the idea of being able to search for information through a highly trustworthy source-their libraries.

**Downloadable audio books allow for multitasking.** Participants liked the idea of being able to access this resource. One participant explained, "I like it because I can do other things while I listen to a book." Several people commented that they would like to be able to download them onto their iPods to listen as they wished.

An online library website/catalog is a desired feature for convenience. Groups favored having the ability to access a library's catalog to check the availability of books online. They also commented that it would be helpful to have the ability to check the status of a book that they had checked out, to verify due date, or to renew a book online. Email reminders of due dates was also mentioned in several groups.

It is important to note that although some Idaho libraries may already have this service available, awareness of the resource among the groups was low, sometimes even among those that used their public library frequently.

Podcasts are popular among those with iPods. Although this service did not receive an outstanding number of votes, people who owned iPods repeatedly supported the availability of podcasts as being highly appealing. The comment "I love podcasts" was frequently heard throughout several groups. It was thought to be an extremely convenient way to stay up-to-date and learn something new every time they connected their iPods to their computers. This may tie in with the younger digital natives' earlier comments about learning. They frequently commented that the information they paid attention to most were new and interesting facts or tidbits. It is not known which podcasts were subscribed to among the participants in these groups.

# **OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)**

When asked to select their favored activities from a list of possible web-based library activities, the older digital natives proceeded through the same process described above for younger digital natives. They first selected from among the activities listed in the table below. As mentioned above, participants in each group were given a sheet with these activities and were asked to circle their "top 6" that they would enjoy the most if delivered by a local public library. Then, the moderator asked for a number of votes for each activity. Generally, the top three activities were discussed in more-depth in each group. A brief description or discussion about each of the more popular choices is given below the table.

POTENTIAL WEB-BASED SERVICES & RESOURCES	18-25 AGE GROUPS
Reference tools	29
Electronic books (online, downloadable)	28
Electronic (online) magazines/journals	27
Online databases	24
Print-on-demand books	23
Topic-specific websites	21
Downloadable audio books	19
Library catalog	19
E-mail	18
Ask-a-librarian service	17
Indexes to full-text journal articles	15
Library website	14
Downloadable computer games	8
IM to a librarian	8
Podcasts	6
Text message a librarian	6
Library MySpace page	5
E-mail information subscriptions	5
RSS feeds	4

The table above shows that the top choices for web-based library services after votes from all groups of younger digital natives were aggregated include:

- Reference Tools
- Electronic Books
- Electronic Magazines/Journals
- Online Databases
- Print-on-Demand Books

Each of these, along with a few other popular choices, is discussed in more detail as follows.

Reference tools offered by a library help with more efficient searching and researching. The older digital natives thought that this might be something like a search engine that the library would provide, or links to search engines that the library recommended. It would be extremely valuable as a tool for filtering out unwanted and unrelated materials. The demand was great among these groups for a search engine that would provide legitimate information from reliable sources, without all of the nonsense associated with using typical search engines.

Electronic books with reference information are helpful. This option was favored by both age groups of digital natives. Like the younger groups, older digital natives like the idea of being able to access books from home. This was mainly associated with reference books. Participants in several groups commented that they would not care to site down and read an entire book on a computer screen. Remarks included:

- "You wouldn't have to go (to the library). You could just sit at home and do it."
- "You don't have to carry it around. You don't have to check them in and out."

Electronic (Online) magazines/journals offered by a library are helpful for both research and leisure reading. This option was also favored by both age groups. Access to this type of resource was popular as a reference tool for schoolwork, but also for leisure reading. One person noted that she would be able to read a single article from a magazine rather than having to purchase the entire publication for one story. Additionally, one group explained that there are some magazines on very specific topics that can be difficult to find, and that this type of access might help them reach these publications more easily. It was also mentioned that this would be a very easy way to access past articles.

Online databases are desired but digital natives are uncertain about the nature of content that would be helpful. These were thought to be another way to access information from reputable sources. One person stated, "I think it would be nice if public libraries had access or links to the other credible sites like college databases so you could check them." Many participants, when asked, however, had difficulty identifying what types of databases would be helpful to them.

**Print-on-Demand books offer convenience.** The reasons that this was a preferred resource were similar to electronic books. Having access to print out books would allow a person just print out the part of a book that was needed, instead of having to carry around a bulky publication.

Additionally, the ability to search text within a book was mentioned; participants found it especially appealing to be able to locate what they needed within a whole text. For example, one could search for an exact phrase or quote within an entire text.

Topic-specific websites chosen by a library would be helpful for research and would be trusted. Groups had different interpretations of what this might mean One person explained, "I just imagine easy-to-access and navigate sites on, I guess, specific topics...it's reputable because it's not Wikipedia, it's the library." A different group thought that this type of resource might mean that the library could build lists of "good sites" or papers on multiple different topics so that a person researching something would not have to use Google and worry about the validity of the information they were finding. Either way, it boiled down to the library providing access to trustworthy information sources.

An on-line library catalog offers convenient access to resources. Participants thought that having access to the library catalog online would be extremely convenient. One person commented, "If I need something specific, I could just quickly go online and place it on hold." As was noted in the younger digital natives write-up, although some Idaho libraries may already have this service available, awareness of the resource among the groups was low, sometimes even among those that used the library frequently.

Some rural residents have an especially difficult time imagining that their small, local library could be anything other than what it is right now.

"I think it's hard, especially for me, because I don't know what a big-city library is...it's hard for me to think of all the cool stuff a library could be besides a little book center."

#### COMPONENTS OF AN IDEAL LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

In this final part of the focus group discussion, as groups of both younger and older digital natives were asked to imagine the library of the future and think creatively, they were able to make suggestions concerning several aspects of "ideal" libraries. Popular concepts and the comments that accompanied the suggestions are provided in this section. Comments in groups were organized by functional areas including:

- Role of librarians
- Additional desired services
- Physical layout features (i.e. spatial layout)
- Optimal mix of materials and resources (i.e. print versus electronic)

Each of these areas is addressed below for both segments of digital natives considered in this study.

# YOUNGER DIGITAL NATIVES (12-17)

The following text summarizes feedback from younger digital natives related to their ideal public library. As mentioned above, librarians, services, physical layout and mix of materials offered by libraries were all considered.

**Librarians should be specialists and up to date.** In addition to "making the library fun" and being "approachable," it was desired that librarians are knowledgeable in certain areas and are up-to-date on technology. These areas are summarized further below:

- Specialize in particular areas. This idea was popular among the older digital natives, as well. One young lady expressed that it would be helpful to, "…have certain librarians work in certain areas, so if you're getting a book just for pleasure, they could say, 'if you like this book, you should look into these.' I think that would be really cool…" Across all groups, participants frequently mentioned that they would like to have a way to find out about more books that they might enjoy.
- **Be up-to-date** as far as technology is concerned. A participant comment, "I think they need to be up to date on technology."

Additional services/resources that are desired include more dialogue with teens, advertising, and teen-related services. Ideas for additional services from libraries included more communication between them and the community served. In addition, teens desired services that are relevant to them.

■ **Get input from teens.** "Maybe have like a teen council or something, a group of kids that would get together and organize events...that would help them reach out to a younger community. The stuff now, you can tell adults organize

it, like 'let's have a kid reading competition,' or something." Another person agreed, stating, "The more you have people around our age hyping it up, the more you'll have (visit)."

- Advertise. Repeatedly, groups expressed that libraries needed to reach out to their communities via advertising. A participant summarized comments from multiple people when she stated, "And even the stuff that they do have (going on), you usually don't know about it because they don't advertise much, unless you do go to the library every single day...if they would just advertise more." Local television stations were suggested as a way to reach people. Another group suggested advertising in school newspapers, or sending out flyers.
- Add a section just for teens. In several groups, participants made comments like, "I think it would be nice...if there was a teen or young adults section." They described an area that could have books for teens, in addition to a music station for listening to popular music, and several computers only for teen use. If a library already had a teen section available, participants felt it should be bigger; one person commented that she wanted, "A lot bigger teen section cause I read a lot of teen books."
- Provide activities that communities want. Groups frequently commented that libraries should take input from their communities when deciding which activities to offer; a young lady commented, "I think libraries can be successful if they involve the community in activities."
- Digital natives would like the opportunity to have books delivered or shipped to them. Several groups commented that the library should provide a service like that which Netflix offers. It was appealing to be able to order a book from the library online and then simply have it delivered, rather than having to go pick it up. This suggestion is in line with the theme of convenience, although one caveat is that digital natives have also said of themselves that they do not like to wait.
- Libraries should offer classes to help people understand how to use their resources. Some of the participants seemed to want a course like this to be incorporated into their school education. One young girl explained, "To me, I think it would be pretty cool if the schools had more friendships to the library, cause of the books and stuff and the library could teach them and tell them why we have books and stuff. I think that would be cool." Another young lady stated, "I think it would be nice if they had a library course…you were required to go to the library for an hour for a session for them to show you how to use it." The older digital natives expressed a similar desire to understand how to use their libraries. This indicates that there is still a desire to use libraries to attain information; they must be made to seem less 'intimidating' by showing digital natives how to use them.

A library's physical lay-out should be open and modern with different sections. Younger digital natives discussed the physical lay-out at length. Many of the suggestions related to an open, bigger, more modern-looking library with delineated sections based on functionality. While some

areas were desired for more social activities, quiet areas were still desired for reading and computer use. The points are summarized below.

- Libraries should have an "open" feel to them. "It's also nice to have open spaces." Larger libraries with high ceilings feel less "claustrophobic."
- Libraries should have different sections or multiple floors in order to provide space for many different types of activities. All groups mentioned that they would like to have areas where they could be loud: areas or rooms to get together with friends in order to study and converse about an assignment, and areas for more casual socializing. "I think if they had a game room, or I don't know, someplace where you didn't have to be quiet all the time (that would be good)."
- Coffee shop/food area. Coffee shops were overwhelmingly considered to be a popular addition to libraries. Some participants went beyond the presence of a coffee shop and suggested having some food available, as well. One participant even said he would add "a bar to attract more adults." It's interesting to note that in each group, one participant commented that they were concerned with having food and drinks around books in case of spills.
- Modernize the furniture. Several groups commented that the shelving in libraries should be more aesthetically pleasing, in addition to more user-friendly. Participants frequently commented that wooden shelves would be preferable to the metal shelves commonly found in libraries. This may be due in part to their high usage of bookstores where shelving is typical wooden.
  - Digital natives also expressed a strong desire for areas with comfortable chairs for reading. One young lady stated, "I wish there were more comfy (places where) you could just sit and read." The addition of a couch and television area where people could hang out was also mentioned several times.
- Media rooms should be made available. This was another physical feature that was popular in many groups. Participants liked the idea of having the equipment and space to listen to CDs or watch DVDs.
- The interior should be made more interesting. Participants often stated that libraries needed to have some color added. One young man commented, "And like, I don't know, it's too boring. Like, put a lava lamp or something." Another person stated that there should be, "Pictures to look at...so if you're thinking about something you just read, it's not just a white wall or something."
- A stage area would be good for performance and social activities. This was mentioned in several groups, as well as among the groups of older digital natives. One young lady suggested that the stage area could include, "a seating area with a laid-back kind of lounge."

Mix of materials include those from both online and paper sources. The following comments demonstrate a desire from the younger digital natives to have access to book content both online, and on paper. This sometimes depended on the reading material itself; for example, it was desirable to read novels and fictional books on paper.

- "I think they should have as much books in hard copy as they do online."
- "I think if you want to read something long-term, then it's got to be a book, or something you can take with you because it's not like you want to sit at a computer for seven hours."
- "Plus, I think that when I read a book, it kind of relieves my stress, but it's not the same as sitting in front of a computer."
- "I'd rather have a book so I could just take it, and I don't have to just sit there. And then you get really tired and your eyes just get all blotty if they have to stare at the computer forever."

What is the biggest thing that needs to change in order for libraries to be appealing?

"I think a more comfortable atmosphere, just to make people feel like it's somewhere you can come just relax."

"Like a hang-out spot with books... 'cause Idaho Falls, we have a movie theater and the mall, and that's about it, so it would be fun to have a hang-out spot like that."

"Yeah, the energy in there is just too, like, kind of nerdy, cause everybody's all tucked in their books. I think it would be better if everybody was just more outgoing, just more talkful, instead of just bunched up in their books."

## **OLDER DIGITAL NATIVES (18-25)**

The following text summarizes feedback from older digital natives related to their ideal public library. As with younger digital natives, librarians, services, physical layout and mix of materials offered by libraries were all considered.

Librarians should be friendly, helpful and specialists in particular areas of the library. Comments about the role of librarians in an ideal library are given below.

- Remain friendly and helpful. "I like them the way they are, kind of. Usually they're really friendly and helpful. If I have a question about where to find something, they're there to help, or if I have a question about a certain topic...they try to help you as much as they can." Another person commented, "They're the easy way, the shortcut. They're like the Google of the library."
- Be enthusiastic, and talk about library events. "I want a librarian that's enthusiastic about what he or she does, to pass on that enthusiasm...more or less advertise the library so that more people are interested in going." Another lady commented, "Maybe just having someone to voice more of what the library has to offer." (This participant wouldn't have known about a story time if the librarian hadn't told her)

- Provide suggestions for reading materials. Many participants that enjoy reading felt that they would be very likely to look to librarians for "recommendations on similar books."
- Specialize in different areas of the library. "Be knowledgeable about what they're doing; there could be people in the music section that know about music." This is similar to the groups of younger digital natives that mentioned it would be helpful if librarians could specialize somewhat to provide really strong service in a particular area. (If librarians already do this, it was not apparent to focus group participants.) "It would be nice if they'd help the librarians specialize a little bit."

Although the opinion was in the minority, there were some people that felt the need for librarians was fading. One person explained, "I don't know that I'd even have librarians, just make everything more electronic-based." Another person mentioned that there could be stations for self check-out, like grocery stores.

Additional services/resources that are desired are those related to keeping the community involved through classes, programs, events, etc. It was suggested that classes or programs ranging from library-usage and navigation to programs for children. The library was also desired to be a repository for community-specific information as well. A list of desired services are presented below.

- Offer classes that teach methods for narrowing searches. This was mentioned in several groups; participants mentioned wanting to be more efficient both using online search engines, and when using the library catalog to perform searches.
- Offer library use classes, like "refresher courses." This is similar to what the younger groups suggested, although the older groups also noted that for them, "having those classes in the evening after standard work hours" would be most helpful.
- **Get, or keep, the community involved.** "Take suggestions from people...form services around that, like what we're doing today."
- **Keep offering programs for children.** One parent commented, "I want them to be able to advance technology-wise in the library...have them teach my kids about what's current that way, too."
- Have a library open-house day and invite the community to come. "Probably do more public things, do things that will bring little kids in, so that will bring the older people in (too), and then while they're walking around, put things out that catches their attention, like different age groups, different races, like everything. Like you could put college stuff out, job and career stuff out." Another participant thought that hosting a barbeque would draw people in to visit library facilities.
- Offer more community-oriented programs and events. "...it gets more people in. When I go, that's why I go." "It would be a good thing because it

- would bring the community into the library." Informal classes on different topics were also mentioned.
- Create an area in which people can go for local, community information. This was addressed quite often in the older groups, especially by college students that felt this was one very important aspect of public libraries.
- Add stations with headphones. "They could put headphones in some of the work stations," since some people really like to work along to music. This is similar to what the younger groups mentioned.
- Start an adult reading program. Launch an incentive program to get adults to read. "Everybody loves free stuff."
- Have laptops available for check-out. This idea was mentioned in a few groups.
- Start a book delivery or mailing service, like Netflix for books. "If you could get a book like (through) Netflix...I would be just as happy." In a different group, another person commented, "They should deliver books to your house."

Older digital natives desire a more comfortable, modern and partitioned library. These attributes of a desired library layout are described further in the text below.

- Make overall atmosphere more comfortable and welcoming. "More open, more windows, light."
- Modernize furnishings. "I think (they should have a lot of overstuffed couches and chairs." (This comment was followed by agreement from several people) Another person stated, "They need to have better seating. If you're going to read a book, you want to sit down and be comfortable."
- Multiple floors or different sections are desirable. The Pocatello Library is one example of where things are kept separate, like having a kids section with computers that have educational games on them. "They have a little bit of everything for somebody...libraries need to have a good variety." Having separate sections or floors within a library was a major theme throughout every group, younger and older. This exemplifies digital natives' want for libraries to maintain a quiet atmosphere, just make it more comfortable, and add places where being quiet isn't required.
- Add a stage/area for performances. This was a popular idea in multiple groups; it fits in nicely with these groups' perceptions about the library being a place to host community events.
- Increase shelf space. It was also suggested that books should be closer to eyelevel, with some book covers viewable. This is similar to some ideas mentioned within the younger groups.

In addition to suggestions above, it was also recommended that libraries add a courtyard area for a place to sit outside.

Desired materials include more entertaining reading choices, more computers and wi-fi access. While some more technology-related materials were desired, participants believed there should generally be a balance between computer-related information and traditional information in paper form.

- Offer more entertainment choices: this includes a larger selection of magazines, more books, too. Several participants specifically mentioned that book selections should be updated.
- Make more computers available (mentioned multiple times). Digital natives hoped that adding more computers would alleviate some of the waiting times they had experienced when trying to get on a computer while at the library. It should be noted that while digital natives wanted time limits on Internet use in libraries so that everyone could have access, it could also be frustrating because sometimes they simply couldn't finish what they were trying to accomplish.
- Go wi-fi so that people with laptops would have online access. This would allow libraries to draw in even people that already have their own computers. This was suggested by several laptop owners.
- Libraries should have a balance between books in paper, and technology. "I'd like to see it equally both (computers and books), not just one or the other." Another person commented in support of books, "I think it still has to have books. Nobody is ever going to own every book that was ever in print, so a library's the only source for that. But obviously, if anyone's going to use it for anything more than just social reading, it's got to have technology...Internet access, and all that." Additionally, one person explained that although adding social space in libraries would be important, books should still be a priority. She commented, "(Have) as much social space as you can, without losing the selection."

"(Make the library) something that tries to excite you...I think most libraries, you walk in and they just kind of suck the life out of you."

"I'd be disappointed (if libraries were no longer around), just more for the fact of remembering when I grew up what it was like to go to the library, the excitement as being a young kid to go to the library. And I want that for my kids, and my grandkids...I want them to have the enjoyment of going in and, look at all these books. When you're little, that's so great."

"I'm not sure how to say it without it sounding so cliché, but I think books, just paper books, kind of transcend time. They've been around for hundreds of years, and just because we have computers now, doesn't mean people are going to stop reading books. Libraries, I don't think, will ever disappear or go only to the Internet. And as long as you have books, you've got to have someone to show you where the books are and how to find them. We're always going to have books."

This concludes the detailed findings for this report. Please refer to the key findings section at the beginning of this report for a summary of general high-level themes that were identified in group discussions.

#### APPENDIX A. MODERATOR'S GUIDE

### WELCOME AND BACKGROUND ON THE FOCUS GROUP (2 MINUTES)

Welcome. Thank you for making time to be here today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for Corona Research, which is a market and demographic research firm located in Denver, Colorado. We are working with the Idaho Commission for Libraries on this project.

Before we get started, I'll give you an introduction about what we're going to do tonight and the reasons that we're doing it.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries is interested in finding out more about a group that is sometimes referred to as Digital Natives. All of you fall into this group, because you were born and raised in a world that relies heavily on using technology in your everyday lives, whether it's using a computer to write a paper, texting a friend on your cell phone, or using the Internet. Your situation-the way you live your lives and with your high contact with technology-- is unique; no generation before you has learned from, or communicated with, the tools that you probably use almost everyday. This is why you are here today.

The Commission wants to better understand how to meet your needs now and in the future, as far as library services. We'd like your assistance tonight to examine library usage as it relates to you. In particular, we would like to understand what sources you use to access information, to discuss your general opinions of libraries, reasons you may use (or not use) libraries, and to find out what library services would be most helpful to you now and in the future.

### LOGISTICS (1 MINUTE)

So that's the big picture. Now let's talk about logistics. We'll be here for 2 hours. Please help yourself to refreshments if you haven't done so already. If you want to get up to get more to eat or drink, or go to the bathroom, feel free to do so. [We do have people observing to take notes], and we are also audiotaping and videotaping the session for reporting purposes. Your comments will be summarized and reported anonymously, though, and we won't identify you as a participant. Finally, we promised to pay you \$60 for participating tonight, and you will be paid at the end of the session.

## **GROUND RULES (2 MINUTES)**

Have any of you have participated in a focus group before?

The rules are simple: I'll bring up a topic, and I want to get your thoughts and opinions. Sometimes I'll ask a question and we'll just go around the table and get everyone's thoughts, and other times I'll just wait for anyone to answer. Feel free to respond to something that someone else says, and feel free to disagree, but please show respect for others even if you disagree with their opinions. There are no wrong answers. At certain points during our discussion I may poll the group to determine how many of you agree or disagree about a certain issue. This will be done to summarize opinions for reporting back to the client.

Keep in mind that we want everyone to participate. If you're not talking, I'll eventually notice and ask you for your opinions. On the other hand, if you're the only one talking, please recognize that and give others a chance to participate.

Finally, I may politely interrupt if you're talking about something that strays off of our topics. No disrespect intended if I do this, but we have a lot to accomplish tonight so we need to stay focused so we can make sure that we don't need to keep you beyond our scheduled two hours.

#### **INTRODUCTIONS (10 MINUTES)**

First, let's briefly introduce ourselves, using a "one minute biography." In one minute or less, tell us the important facts about yourself: your first name, your age, where you're from, and where you go to school (for older group: where you work or go to school).

### FREE TIME ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT (15 MINUTES)

In our opening section, let's talk a little about what you do with your free time.

- 1. First of all, do you feel like you have much free time? Why (not)? [Moderator: listen for school commitment, chores, responsibilities, etc.]
- 2. What do you do in your free time? What do you like to do for fun? [Moderator: listen for organized activities versus informal activities and differentiate between the two]
- 3. What kinds of entertainment do you enjoy? [e.g. Movies, television, online video, video games, etc.]
  - How are you accessing these?
- 4. What kinds of technology do you use on a daily basis? [e.g. PC, cell phone, MP3 player, portable game player, iPod, etc.]
  - How are you using these? Please provide examples.

## **LEARNING & INFORMATION (25 MINUTES)**

Now let's talk about your experiences with learning and information.

- 5. Is education and learning important? Why (not)?
- 6. Do you enjoy education and learning? Please describe your experiences. [Moderator: probe for experiences outside of traditional schoolwork]

- 7. Please discuss the role and relative importance of each of the following in terms of your education and learning experience. [Moderator: read one at a time and explore]
  - People [e.g. with friends, from an instructor, tutor, etc.]
  - Information [e.g. books, magazines, online, etc.]
  - Things [e.g. for hands-on, fix-it type situations such as repairing a car, etc.]
  - Technology [e.g. Internet, podcasting, online resources, etc.]
- 8. [Moderator: ask if not already addressed] Which of resources just discussed helps you the most with your schoolwork?
- 9. What kinds of information do you pay attention to most often? How do you get this information?
- 10. If you need to find information on a topic that you don't know about, where do you go? What sources do you use?
  - Please discuss a recent example of a situation in which you needed to find information and what you did to locate it.
  - Are there any particular sources that you find yourself using repeatedly to find different types of information?
- 11. In your experience, what kinds of information are particularly difficult to find?

### **GENERAL OPINIONS - LIBRARIES (15 MINUTES)**

Next, let's hear discuss your general opinions about libraries.

- 12. What is the first word or short phrase that comes to mind when you think of a library? Please explain further.
- 13. What purpose does a library serve?
- 14. What kinds of services do libraries provide?
- 15. Please think about your local library(ies). (If you are familiar) What do you like about it/them? What do you not like about it/them? [Moderator: if not mentioned, probe for customer service aspects and hours of operation]
- 16. Do you consider a library to be for entertainment and fun *or* for factual information-gathering purposes? Both? Why?
- 17. Is your local library a place where you can go and hang out with a friend? Why (not)?

18. Are libraries useful to you? Please explain.

## PUBLIC LIBRARY USAGE (OR NON-USAGE) AND REASONS (20 MINUTES)

In this section, we'd like to discuss your usage of local public libraries.

- 19. [Show of hands] Who has never used a local public library? Why haven't you? [listen for barriers, no need, etc.?]
  - What would make you want to start using one?
- 20. Are there any of you who have used a local library in the past, but have not done so recently? Let's say, if you haven't been to the library in two years, raise your hand [quick poll].
  - Why haven't you been to a library recently?
  - What would make you want to start using one?
- 21. For those of you who have recently used a local library, please explain the following:
  - How often do you go?
  - Why do you typically go to the library? [Think about the last time you went]
  - [If not already answered] What types of services do you use while you are there (check out books, get help from a librarian, computer work, etc.)?
  - Are you able to accomplish what you set out to do? If not, why? [e.g. was it because the library lacked particular services, equipment, or publications that kept you from finding what you needed?]
  - What could be improved? What would make you want to use the library more?
- 22. Who has recently visited an online library? If so,
  - What online library did you visit?
  - What online services or information were you looking for?
  - Was there a teen (young adult)-specific webpage? If so, was it helpful?

#### LIBRARY SERVICES & THE IDEAL LIBRARY (40 MINUTES)

In our final section, we'd like to discuss your preferences for library services and your ideas for libraries of the future. Feel free to think creatively in this section.

- 23. First, however, let's talk about some common resources you may use that are also available at libraries: Books; magazines and newspapers; music; PC with Internet; and movies on DVDs. [Moderator- for each of these ask the following:]
  - Do you use this resource?
  - How do you choose it? / Where do you get it from?
  - What type of [books, magazines, music, etc.] do you use?
  - Would you consider a local library for this resource? Why (not)?
- 24. Have you ever used LiLI databases of full text magazines at a library or elsewhere? Please explain.
- 25. [Moderator: Pass out list of possible library services/programs, then tally responses to each by show of hands. Talk about the top 3.] Please consider this list of library services. Please circle the seven services that you would enjoy the most.
  - What interests you about this service/program?
  - How could your local library best incorporate this to make you interested in participating? [Moderator: listen here for preference of online options versus on-site]
- 26. Finally, we'd like to discuss your opinions about electronic web-based library services. [Moderator: Pass out list of web-based library services/programs, then tally responses to each by show of hands. Talk about the top 3.] Please consider this list of web-based library services. Please circle the six services that you would enjoy the most.
  - What interests you about this service/program?
  - How could your local library best incorporate this service to make you interested in participating? [Moderator: listen here for preference of online options versus on-site]
- 27. Are there any other services or programs that a local library should offer to become the ultimate source for information?
- 28. Finally, if you were in charge of creating an ideal local public library for customers:
  - What role would librarians play?

- How would the library look in terms of physical layout? (i.e. spatial layout)
- What would be the optimal mix of materials and resources? (i.e. print versus electronic)
- What would be the biggest difference from your current local library?

## CONCLUSION

Thank you for your time! This will be really helpful for the Idaho library community. Now, we've promised you a payment...

# APPENDIX B. BOOKS & LIBRARIES VS. THE INTERNET

# SUMMARY OF DIGITAL NATIVES' PERCEPTIONS ON:

BOOKS & LIBRARIES	THE INTERNET
It's slower to look for information in books	It's much faster to obtain information online
It isn't easy for everyone to find the books needed because it isn't always understood how to search for information in libraries	It's easier to use the Internet to search for something because search engines are easily understood
Information in books requires a trip to the library	Information online can be accessed from home
In general, information in books is much more trustworthy than what is found online; the library is a source for credible information	Information online is not always trustworthy and must usually be verified through several sources before it's considered valid
Even once the right book is located, the information still has to be found within it; the entire book must be carried until it's found	The Internet allows readers to pinpoint particular information and print out only what is needed
Text in library books is not supposed to be highlighted; notes cannot be written in them	Students can highlight and make notes on the information they print out from the Internet
Information in books seems less up-to-date	Information on the Internet is much more current because it can be updated frequently
It's nice to have a physical book that can be taken home and read as needed	It's difficult to read things on the screen for a prolonged period of time
The library is a good place to go when you need to "buckle down" and get things done; you are more likely to stay focused	When researching online, the Internet has more distractions (MySpace, pop-ups, etc.) since it's used as a social tool, too

# APPENDIX C. LIBRARY RESOURCES OR ACTIVITIES (12-17)

Digital Photography Club

Video Game Checkout

Teen Poetry Group

Amateur Comedy / Improv Events

Knitting, Sewing, Embroidering, Quiltmaking Club

Anime & Manga Club

Book Club

Battle of the Bands Events

Friday Afternoon Teen Movies

Coffee Shop Area

Weekly Game Room – play against others (e.g. Sodoku, Uno, Risk, Clue, Monopoly, Pictionary)

Computer Game Room

Arts & Crafts Club

Make a Zine

Videogame Club – play videogames on a large projector screen (X Box, etc.)

Used Media Swap (Books, CDs, DVDs, Video games)

SAT Preparation/Practice Sessions

Writer's Group

Chess Club

Homework Assistance/Tutoring (On location)

Homework Assistance/Tutoring (Online)

Volunteer Opportunities (for summer)

### APPENDIX D. LIBRARY RESOURCES OR ACTIVITIES (18-25)

Arts & Crafts Classes

Video Game Checkout

Jobs & Career Information

Amateur Comedy/Improve Events

Knitting, Sewing, Embroidering, Quiltmaking Club

Used Media Swap: Books, CDs, DVDs, Video Games, etc.

Book Club/Reading Program

Coffee Shop Area

**Business Information** 

Computer Game Room

Government Information

Speed Dating Events

Reference Information

Personal Finance/Budgeting Classes

College Resources

Videogame Program for Adults

Meeting/Study Rooms

Writer's Group

Local History or Genealogy Information

Computer Classes

Consumer Product Information

Foreign Language Classes

Literacy Classes

Battle of the Bands Events

### APPENDIX E. WEB-BASED LIBRARY SERVICES & RESOURCES

Online databases

Ask-a-librarian service

Electronic books (online, downloadable)

Library website

E-mail

Downloadable audio books

**Podcasts** 

RSS feeds

Library MySpace page

Library catalog

Reference tools

Electronic (online) magazines/journals

E-mail information subscriptions

Indexes to full-text journal articles

Downloadable computer games

Print-on-demand books

Topic-specific websites

Text message a librarian

IM to a librarian